

THE FICTION PROBLEM IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES;  
A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO  
CAPE TOWN CITY LIBRARY SERVICE

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## PREFACE

This study is the result of several years work in branch, hospital and mobile service libraries, and eventually the more administrative side of public library services at Head Office. It is also the result of a deep interest in and concern for all facets of the problem posed by differing concepts of the library's role as seen by its professional staff and its users. The administration and staff of Cape Town City Library Service together with the University of Cape Town were instrumental in making possible such a research project and I am indebted to them.

From a professional point of view I should like to express my thanks to my supervisor Professor J G Kesting for his guidance, and to Mrs G Smith of the University of Cape Town School of Librarianship.

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# ABSTRACT

The focal point of this study emanates from both personal observations formed in public library branch work and questions raised in the subject literature to the effect that tension appears to exist between the wants of the majority of users and the perception of the dominant goals of the public library by their staff, resulting in differing views as to the book selection policy of this institution. Book selection policies have been taken to reflect the attitudes of library staff towards users' wants in terms of their adherence to the tenets of Anglo-American public library objectives.

From the researcher's branch library experience the crucial area of contention was perceived to relate to the selection and provision of popular categories of fiction, namely the bestseller and lighter fiction genres. Here the time and effort expended by the majority of users in their search for suitable titles, and by most staff members in attempting to offer assistance, appeared frustrating for both. Thus this study was conceived as an attempt to explore the nature, the origins and the continued existence of the problem.

The first aspect of investigation was that of the history of the public library, which was considered from the broad viewpoint of three countries related by cultural ties and experience (viz Great Britain, the United States of America and South Africa). This was done to gain insight into the historical background and thus the influence that accompanied the establishment of public libraries in these countries. The very manner in

which public libraries were established was considered important, for it is at this point that historical precedents and priorities - the impact of which is still felt today - contributed to the articulation of the original public library objectives and their subsequent modification. Of special interest was a reappraisal of the realities affecting the reading requirements of the user public of the libraries that were contemporaneous with the emergent public library in the mid-nineteenth century.

As the major socio-cultural concerns of the mid-nineteenth century - in both Britain and the United States - arose largely from the need for social reform and the education of many newly-urbanised people, it is not surprising that its founders closely associated the public library with these concerns as a means not only of addressing such perceived problems, but hence of gaining public recognition and support for their proposals.

An examination of the subsequent development of public library objectives indicated relatively minor changes in substance, approach and emphasis. Likewise a consideration of the relationship between book selection policies on the one hand and library objectives, which tend to be the main expression of the public library's attitudes and understanding of user requirements, on the other hand, demonstrated only minor shifts of ground.

A review of research conducted into the field of users and their needs in the pioneering 1930s isolated those characteristics which most closely define the public library user as well as the factors which are influential in developing the reading habit in adults. It was found that all three countries exhibited broadly comparable characteristics and

reading preferences, which generally relate to middle-class characteristics of education, vocational training and a responsible employment situation. As regards leisure reading preferences, evidence suggests that the great popularity in public library reading relates to the popular or sub-class categories of fiction.

However, through historical influence and the setting of professional objectives, which in turn are reflected in perception of the aims of book selection, public library staff attitudes appear closely associated with an emphasis on the reading of good literary works. This predominantly educational orientation towards public library reading for purposeful reasons rather than a means of sheer enjoyment as an end itself, constitutes the crucial approach which lends itself to the potential of collective tension between the expectations of public library staff on the one hand and those of users on the other. If, as was found, the majority of users prefer more popular categories of fiction to those presumed by public library book selectors to possess greater literary merit, the important question arises as to what manner of satisfactions the reading of popular categories of fiction has to offer? Provisional indications of possible user satisfaction, based on observations of human responses to drama as a literary genre for example, suggest that vicarious emotional release and problem-solving are important aspects of a highly complex and powerful subconscious drive which may well be satisfied by an exposure to popular rather than classical and other manifestly educational material.

Subsequent research studies conducted in this field after those of the 1930s was found to yield relatively little new information. This is

associated not only with the difficulties in obtaining useful information, but the continuing poor financial climate of the public library has also not made such research attractive.

Two surveys were conducted to relate and explore the contemporary situation in South Africa. The first, for users, was designed to ascertain their reading preferences and to provide some indication of reading purpose and motives. The second was a survey among leading library staff from every branch library of a chosen urban public service, together with those involved in book selection at headquarters, conducted in an attempt to compare the expressed wants of users to the attitudes of library staff towards these wants. The data from both surveys were then juxtaposed to establish whether significant differences or similarities existed.

The comparison of evidence provided by the two surveys suggests the existence of tension between the manifest wants of the majority of users and library staff members' perceptions of such wants. The most striking divergence noted was the expressed desire of most users to read predominantly for leisure purposes, while the main thrust of staff responses and comments, taken as indications of their attitudes, eschewed a primary preoccupation with the public library's informational and educational objectives, almost to a neglect of the pursuit of the leisure principle as an end itself.

Individual comments tended to reinforce the more formal responses concerning preferences for public library objectives, indicating that many

staff members desired leisure reading to be not only purposeful, but progressive in manner and idealistic in the satisfactions achieved.

No real evidence for the desire of the majority of users to read progressively better works of fiction for their leisure reading could be established, nor was there an indication that most users wished to read for purposeful reasons. Further, it was possible to investigate perceived attitudes among library staff (also evident for a survey of the literature). This subsumed a correlation between the reading of complex fiction by public library users with higher levels of educational attainment, and, conversely, an association of adult users with the lowest educational levels with the genres of light fiction. These assumptions appeared to be unfounded in this exploratory study. Evidence suggests rather that all educational groups exhibit remarkably similar reading patterns, characterised by a dominant preference for sub-classical fiction, typified largely by the category of the bestseller novel.



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## CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The main resource of the public library may be considered to be its bookstock, in turn, the responsibility for its development may be viewed as being the concern of the professional librarian. Thus the effectiveness of the library - in terms of satisfying the requirements of its users - suggests an interrelatedness between the objectives of the public library and the attitudes of those who are involved in providing access to the bookstock.

Because the various terms used to designate the reading requirements of the individual, the manner in which the user exhibits his own perceived wants and likewise the perception of public library user needs by the public library, some more precise definition of the relevant terms is immediately necessary. For the purpose of this study such terms, as defined by Line, will be employed. The concept of 'need' is defined by others as implying what an 'individual ought to have', this also suggests an element of 'necessity'. On the other hand the notion of 'wants', is determined by the user himself and signifies what the user would like to have, thus becoming a potential demand. The related term 'demand' is considered as reflecting what aspect of information the individual perceives this 'want' to be, but it is also closely governed by his own sense of expectation. 'Requirements', however, may involve any of the foregoing terms, and may be employed in a such a manner.

The term 'use', by comparison, reflects a 'satisfied demand', it also reflects the reality of what the individual 'actually uses', but is also subject to such elements as 'availability' (Line, 1974 : 87).

It had been apparent from this researcher's working experience that discrepancies exist between leisure-reading wants, as exhibited by the reading habits, or use, of leisure reading material by public library users on the one hand, and the perception of library staff of such wants, or user needs, on the other. The general impression gained in practice was that professional staff tended to disapprove of the distribution of popular categories of fiction and other works generally rated as being of lower intellectual or artistic standard, and further that they tended to associate such material with the less educated reader.

Accordingly, informal (and - to some extent - also formal) discussion on these aspects of users' leisure-reading needs and demands with colleagues in the same library system revealed a lack of consensus regarding both the need for and the means of providing a balanced bookstock in that library system or in public library systems as a whole, together with an apparently unquestioning acceptance of public library objectives (cf LA, 1971 : 2). Similarly, there has been an absence of clarity and agreement as to the extent to which users' manifest demands should be acceded to in formulating public library collection-development policies.

An initial inspection of the professional literature relating specifically to librarians' perceptions of responses to the manifest wants of public

library users produced relatively little precisely relevant material on the issue.

The main thrust of the most pertinent articles consulted at the time reflected an emphasis directed towards 'literary merit' as a primary criterion in public library collection-development policies, with little consideration apparently accorded to user satisfaction - here assumed to be gained more readily from the reading of popular fiction than of works viewed as being of 'literary merit' in terms of given criteria - which might well be of paramount importance in determining such policies.

From this preliminary inspection of the literature, it was apparent that the perceptions of the objectives of the public library, which underlie the authors' views on the most appropriate approaches to collection-development policies, appear to be firmly grounded in the 1971 British Library Association's statement on public library aims and objectives (Library Association, 1971 : 233-4), and in the well-known declaration of the American Library Association in 1943 (American Library Association, 1943 : 20-21). A notable feature of the literature was the absence of directions as to how the principles of these two major Anglo-American public library statements were to be applied to collection-development policies and, in particular, as to the manner in which the stated objective of 'leisure' (or 'recreation') is to be interpreted in the context of book selection.

It was further observed that many staff members exhibited attitudes towards user leisure-reading demands which may only be described as



lacking in enthusiasm, preferring that they read works of a more literary or purposeful nature, eg by attempting to recommend popular biographies of eminent persons. Indeed, many of the attitudes expressed towards leisure reading appeared out-moded in that they seemingly related to a different era, when ideological and sociological attitudes and objectives were fashioned to meet entirely different situations which prevailed at the time.

Such differing attitudes between library staff and the demands of their users, it was felt, could have serious ramifications on the operation of the public library service as a whole. This apparent lack of consensus and clear definition of objectives is seen to be affecting its very purpose and hence its future existence. Therefore this problem appears to be one which requires urgent consideration and investigation.

This research project has been constructed specifically to enquire into the relationship between the leisure-reading demands, seen as an expression of underlying wants, of public library users, and the attitudes of the public library towards the satisfaction of such demands. From this statement of the problem the following supposition will be explored in the literature survey :

The predominant attitude of public library staff towards the provision of popular fiction might well be at variance with the manifest leisure-reading demands of the majority of public library users.

It should be added that the scope of this study does not intend to cover such contentious questions as to whether or not public libraries in general should be free, nor whether they should indeed cater for the leisure or recreational wants of their public. Neither does it seek to restate the public library's objectives. These are all long-standing arguments which merit full treatment on an independent basis, but which are of necessity related to the subject of this research project.

## 1.2 PROPOSED METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

A systematic survey of the relevant literature, based on the supposition and problems outlined in 1.1, will be undertaken in an attempt to formulate an appropriate research proposition for this study (cf 4.4). The outline of the problem in 1.1 suggests three aspects that should be addressed in the literature study, viz

1. The historical establishment and subsequent development of public libraries to establish origins of the problem of users' wants and public library attitudes (cf Ch 2).
2. The development and present status of public library objectives to provide a basis for establishing public librarians' attitudes towards recreational reading (cf Ch 3).

3. Library use and recreational reading habits to provide substantive information relating to the core problem under investigation (cf Ch 4).

This will be followed by an empirical investigation to explore the research proposition by means of a survey of a subset of users of a specific public library service in Cape Town (cf Ch 5 & 6). The final conclusions will be presented in Chapter 7.

The literature survey will involve the perusal and consultation of the major abstracting publications, subject catalogues, bibliographies and a wide range of books and periodicals (mainly in English) pertaining to the central topic under investigation. The literature survey will also cover a number of fringe subjects in so far as they have a bearing upon the central issue. The empirical study will constitute a survey of the opinions of public library users, relating to their requirements and attitudes towards public library leisure reading.

The literature review provides a means of viewing public library leisure reading in its proper historical context, special emphasis being given to the influences and developmental motives which initially shaped the public library objectives generally, and attitudes towards leisure reading in particular (cf Ch 2). The importance of such influences may be seen in the effect they may be expected to have upon the subsequent development of public library objectives and ultimately upon the selection of book stocks (cf Ch 3). It will be assumed, however, that whatever the assumptions surrounding the development of objectives, their real effectiveness must eventually relate to the wants of the public library user, his

characteristics and reasons for leisure-reading choices (which in their turn are governed by the anticipation of satisfactions he may obtain from them) (cf Ch 4).

For the purpose of obtaining the widest possible understanding, and because the South African public library movement is based on the Anglo-American model, the literature survey will cover the establishment and present status of the public library in Britain and the United States of America as well as in South Africa.

It is hoped that the final analysis of the information obtained from the survey of the literature and the empirical study (Ch 7) will provide a basis for arriving at an understanding of the origin and perpetuation of the problem as outlined in the previous section (cf 1.1), and formally stated in Chapter 4 (cf 4.4). It is also hoped to provide not only a greater understanding of user reading satisfaction and an appreciation of the benefits of leisure reading, but encouragement for further research that this important field deserves.

### 1.3. EMPIRICAL STUDY ORIGINS AND SURVEY LOCATION

The empirical study was constructed and the survey executed within the framework of the Cape Town City Library Service (CTCLS), where the researcher was employed for many years. During this time, whilst gaining practical experience in the branches and also at Head Office, the problem of unsatisfied user demands (cf 1.1) had become apparent. This was primarily as a result of frequent user requests and expressed difficulties

they experienced in finding suitable leisure reading titles. It was also observed that this situation constituted a serious problem, and seemed not only to be unduly time-consuming, for both staff members and users, but that it appeared to create an unsatisfactory situation where users' demands were unable to be fully satisfied. From the attitudes expressed by personnel at Head Office and during book selection meetings, it seemed apparent that the categories of popular fiction that branch library users requested did not receive the same approbation from librarians as did non-fiction or fiction of a more advanced literary nature.

Therefore, research into the underlying factors of public library user wants and public library objectives in relation to the provision of bookstock, was considered necessary as the best means of gaining a fuller understanding of the situation. As such, it may hopefully contribute towards the refinement of the resolution of this problem.

As employment within the CTCLS over a period of several years, offered the ideal means for both viewing and researching the problem it was obviously eminently practical to use the facilities available within the service for the purpose of the empirical study.

Moreover, from personal observations gained during visits to city and municipal branch libraries in both Britain and the United States in recent years, it seemed apparent that conditions and clientele do not greatly differ in their essentials from those of the Cape Town City Library Service. The latter was therefore considered to be a suitable environment in which to conduct the empirical survey envisaged.

## CHAPTER 2 : THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

### 2.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

To place this study in the fullest context of its historical and developmental background, the establishment and growth of the public library will be briefly charted in three countries, namely Britain, the United States of America and South Africa. These three countries are closely linked by language and cultural associations, so much so that any development in the one must prove influential to all.

Of the three countries Britain must be seen as a founder, a mother-country who alone experienced a long and gradual history in library development. Britain too was to experience the issue of public library establishment aired in the country's Parliament, where its role and attendant problems were considered at a fully national level.

This chapter will investigate in particular those early institutions that constituted the physical and conceptual foundations or models for the public library, in addition to the contemporary establishments which reflected the actual reading habits of the library users of the early mid-nineteenth century. For it is here that the reality of public reading requirements must be determined.

As a means of better understanding modern public library objectives, seen as the reflection of the desired role and use of the public library, the manner in which its founders provided evidence and assumptions of use to

justify its establishment using public funds, will be given special consideration.

Finally, as has already be suggested : earlier (cf 1.1), public library objectives are not always in harmony with the wants of public library users, evidence, or refutation, of the existence of such a situation will be considered in the following chapters.

## 2.2 THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN GREAT BRITAIN

### 2.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Public libraries may be considered to have developed from the monastic and cathedral libraries of the Middle Ages which were followed by the development of the universities and, eventually, university libraries. Whereas the religious establishments had preserved knowledge for centuries, it was the universities which put such knowledge to use. This knowledge, too, was to become the foundation of the scholarship which heralded the creation of the modern age (Johnson, 1965 : 128-9).

In theory the early religious institutions made their libraries open to all, but in practice no general reading public actually existed at that time, and education was confined principally to the clergy, the upper classes and the merchants (Baker, 1922 : 11).

The evolutionary changes which marked the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern era were broadly based upon three factors. These

included cultural, educational and economic changes, which involved improvements in the production and distribution of books and the growth of a professional class. The role of librarian developed later, sometimes as a learned scholar, rather in the manner of the scholar-librarians of Hellenistic Greece or their counterparts in France and Germany from the seventeenth century onwards. But frequently the position was only that of a caretaker, solely concerned with the physical condition of the books (Wormald & Wright, 1958 : 60, 79-80, 178).

Giving considerable impetus to the development of a reading public, the invention of printing with movable type in the mid-fifteenth century facilitated the availability of books and ideas on an unprecedented scale (Kelly, 1966a : 38). Increasingly books were required for practical purposes to gain information and guidance now necessary for the new forms of economy which had superseded the old feudal system. Soon books at a secular level came to be associated with improvement and progress (Altick, 1957 : 26). In spite of the rapid increase of books and printed materials it was not until the beginning of the seventeenth century that the first town or "public libraries" began seriously to appear, founded by municipal authorities and independent of religious institutions (Kelly, 1966a : 74-75).

By the eighteenth century many book clubs, for the use of the more educated upper classes and learned societies with their own libraries, already existed. However, with the increasing mercantile prosperity and rapidly increasing population, a new middle class emerged. In this new social stratum of society, people who had enjoyed some education, found



relatively little to satisfy their reading wants. This applied to women in particular, and it was for this reading public in the main that Samuel Richardson was to produce a novel in 1740 which found immediate success and was the first in a long line of what is now considered to be 'bestsellers' (Altick, 1957 : 41-45, 49).

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, great technological and social changes affected all levels of society. They originated chiefly from those factors which caused the change in the national economy from a predominantly agricultural to an industrial one. Such changes saw the migration of lesser-educated workers from the land to new industrial towns, and it had the effect of creating serious social problems connected with rapid population and urban growth (Kelly, 1966a : 120).

Although social reform was seen as a means of strengthening existing social structures (Altick, 1957 : 143), the great reforming movements of the first half of the nineteenth century were specifically aimed at the education and health of the poorer classes (Minto, 1932 : 15-18). Such people were by no means unaware that it was through education that their standards of living could be improved (Baker, 1922 : 4; Irwin, 1966 : 15). However, Kelly considers that social reform was the product of enlightened action by the upper classes, rather than the result of threats of unrest among the lesser educated masses (Kelly, 1973 : 3). Although in Altick's view the motives behind social change were more related to the interests of the upper classes, the important fact was that the development of a

reading public was inevitably linked to the progress of such changes (Altick, 1957 : 81-85).

One important source of influence which should not be omitted is that of religion in the nineteenth century, which experienced something of a revival. Through the activities of the two main groups, the religious Evangelicals and the more secular Utilitarians, reading was not only to be greatly influenced but received considerable impetus (Altick, 1957 : 99, 132-36).

As may be seen, the factors involved in the development of the public library are manifold and complex. To a certain extent they may be formulated into three main causal theories by historians. The first of these was that of social conditions, which was seen as the means of creating social stability. Secondly, some historians interpreted development in terms of the democratic theory, which views the library as a way of 'strengthening' democracy (Williams, 1981 : 334). Finally other historians base their understanding of public library history on the theory of the public library being employed as a means of control of social change by disseminating upper-class values (ibid. 1981 : 329-37).

By the late eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century, libraries available to the public for leisure-time reading consisted principally of municipal institutions, parochial libraries, subscription libraries and the Mechanics' Institutes (Minto, 1932 : 22).

These libraries, with all their unrealistic aims and imperfections, were the immediate forerunners of the rate-supported free public library service, and, as such, were the foundation from which it eventually arose. The characteristics of these libraries will be considered in more detail in the following section.

#### 2.2.1.1 ENDOWED MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES

Municipal authorities, to some extent, maintained libraries as early as the fifteenth century. Such libraries were usually associated with churches, schools or specially appointed boards. They were mostly established in market towns and their book stocks were of a predominantly religious nature (Kelly, 1966a: 69). Prior to the development of printing by movable type, libraries in the fifteenth century were almost exclusively in the hands of the universities, the church (i.e. particularly the cathedrals, abbeys and monasteries), and also some of the wealthier corporations and guilds. With the greater availability of books facilitated by printing, it became possible for professional men to own private libraries and collections of books. They in turn often bequeathed such collections to their own colleges, churches or members of their own profession, thereby founding some of the specialist libraries still in existence today (Ogle, 1897 : 3-4).

As early as the fifteenth century 'posthumous benevolence' was evident in aid to the poor, the maintenance of grammar schools and the establishment of municipal libraries (cf 2.2.1). Examples of this may be seen in Kalendar's Guild in Bristol in 1464 and Chetham's Library in Manchester

which was established by the wealthy wool merchant, Humphrey Chetham in 1613 (Altick, 1957 : 213). It was not until the seventeenth century, however, that such bequests to municipalities or city corporations became more common (Minto, 1932 : 22; Ogle, 1897 : 4). It seems apparent that the desire to help the less fortunate gave rise to such donations, which were usually made with the stipulation that they be preserved for the free use of all. Possibly the earliest public library (i e, in the sense of being free and accessible to all) was established in the Free Grammar School of Coventry in 1601. This library, with the list of the original donors intact, was sold to Cambridge University Library in the early part of this century (Minto, 1932 : 22). Another such public library, established in Norwich in 1608, has preserved a continuous history, and now forms part of the Norwich Free Public Library. Just how free these libraries were is, of course, debatable; in practice it appears that they were frequently accessible only to private library societies (cf 2.2.2.1) (Ogle, 1897 : 4).

The development of a relationship between municipal maintenance and public access was an important one, as it was the very lack of proper maintenance and the need for adequate funds for preservation and growth that presented one of the greatest obstacles in assuring the continuity of the early libraries (Minto, 1932 : 23-24).

Some two hundred endowed libraries were established in Britain between the mid-sixteenth century and the end of the eighteenth century, thus bridging the gap between the medieval institutions and the establishment of the

free public library system in the mid-nineteenth century (Kelly, 1966a : 68-69).

#### 2.2.1.2 PAROCHIAL LIBRARIES

The eighteenth century saw the development of parochial libraries. The basis of many of these were donations and gifts, albeit on a relatively small scale. Such libraries, as was the case with church and cathedral libraries, were primarily for the use of the clergy, but were in fact accessible to the lay person upon a suitable introduction. At least one such parish library in Beccles, Suffolk, 'made the comment of a town library', but in similar fashion to the endowed libraries, it fell into neglect through want of proper provision (Minto, 1932 : 24-25).

In 1699 the Rev. James Kirkwood instigated the establishment of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the aims of which were to provide a library in every parish and to make books available in the rural areas. His work was carried on by Dr Thomas Bray (1657 - 1730) who established sixty-one such libraries (Ogle, 1897 : 6; Kelly, 1966a: 90).

Following a journey to the British colony of Maryland in America, Bray founded the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in 1701, with a lending library in Westminster. This Society had similar aims of distributing books amongst people and parishes (Harvey, 1980 : 172-73). The two societies eventually were to become the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), and as such are still extant (SPCK, 1979 : 3335).

The motivation behind such an enterprise was mainly to improve the level of learning and knowledge in the rural areas, and to encourage the young men to study. Unfortunately the parochial libraries suffered the fate of inadequate financial provision and most of them eventually fell into disrepair (Minto, 1932 : 25-28). However, some were later rescued by municipal authorities and became the nucleus of public libraries (Altick, 1957 : 214n).

By the eighteenth century the gradual swing away from the religious orientation of libraries, to that of a more secular nature was discernible. An interesting example of several pre-public library strands of influence being involved in one library, is evident from Doncaster Public Library. The 'Society's Library' was set up by both clergy and laymen as a public centre for bequests and donations towards the creation of a 'common public library'. It was established in 1722 in Doncaster church, and was used partly by lay people. It is of some interest to note that, although roughly two-thirds of the books were of a religious nature, such material was found to be only a poor third choice (in terms of popularity) among readers, history proving the most popular category (Kaufman, 1969 : 94-96).

It is apparent that such bequests to local authorities were not only motivated by public-spiritedness, but were also designed to guarantee the preservation and future development of such collections through the use of public funds. An example of such municipal care is evident from Leicester City's own free library, which was established in 1632, and was saved from neglect by the Leicester Corporation (Ogle, 1897 : 5).

However accessible these libraries were to the general public, they were of little use to the general reader, being composed of religious works and mainly of an antiquarian nature at that (cf 2.2.2.1) (Altick, 1957 : 213-14).

These societies were part of a general breaking away from the established Church of England, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century included two active organisations, viz the religious Evangelicals and the more secular Utilitarians. Believing that the Bible was the fount of all things, the Evangelicals in particular saw the reading of the Bible as an act of grace of equal importance to daily prayer (even though the text was not always fully understood). Such movements strongly encouraged reading using the written word as a powerful means of prozelytisation. But by emphasising the importance of enlightenment and self-improvement, they condemned reading for entertainment, seeing it as frivolous. This included literature which they considered as lacking any function (Altick, 1957 : 99-100, 129-37).

#### 2.2.1.3 SUBSCRIPTION LIBRARIES

The basis of the subscription library was the notion of 'clubbing together to buy'. This was an adaptation of a principle underlying the earlier religious libraries of the mid-seventeenth century, an approach also used

by the gentlemen's social libraries of the eighteenth century (Kelly, 1966a : 121-22).

These gentleman's social or subscription libraries, found in town and country, were also known as proprietary libraries whose members were shareholders or proprietors (Kelly, 1966a : 128). The more select libraries charged an entrance fee and an annual subscription, and members were able to choose from an extensive range of what was termed 'well-selected books'. These included material on such subjects as ancient and modern history, travel, biography, politics and belles lettres, thus covering a wide range of interest. However, such libraries reflected two fundamental motives. First, many professional people were not able to afford a wide range of books for themselves; and, second, in keeping with the puritanical spirit of the time, they provided books of good taste for the young, to protect them from 'the indiscriminate reading of common circulating libraries' (Kaufman, 1969 : 19-21). Such libraries, as the term 'gentleman's social libraries' implies, were intended primarily for the use by men. Occasionally, however, women were permitted to join, as at Clavering in Essex - but paying only half the customary fee (Kelly, 1966a : 139).

As a completely secular library for general public use, the subscription library was possibly the most successful of its kind, prior to the rate-assisted public library. By 1830 subscription libraries had been established in most major towns and cities in Britain. They appeared under such names as the 'Lyceum' or the 'Athenaeum' (Minto, 1932 : 37-39), and catered for a reading public of the period which comprised mainly the



local gentry, professional men, the clergy, schoolmasters and the wealthier tradespeople (Kaufman, 1969 : 58; Kelly, 1966a : 204).

The late seventeenth century saw the spread of reading, encouraged by the appearance of newspapers and journals by the end of the century. Coffee houses of the time also disseminated news and information and encouraged reading, by making a variety of reading material available to their clients (Kaufman, 1969 : 115-16). So, too, a growing economy and the increasing population led to the emergence of a new leisured class - a class which could not only afford to read, but who had the time and sufficient education to find reading an attractive leisure-time occupation (Kelly, 1966a : 122).

It seems evident that the practice of lending books had developed into two separate streams towards the end of the eighteenth century. The one type (usually attached to a scientific, literary or philosophical society) provided for the educational and intellectual needs of the middle and upper middle classes. Another catered for the lower echelons of the middle class, those who were interested in serious reading and who developed their own book clubs on the proprietary principle. Of greater influence on mass reading, however, was the development of the commercial circulating libraries, which provided novels and 'other light literature'. Altick attributes their success to the increasing middle class reading public and 'a new fascination of the novel' (cf 2.2.1) (Altick, 1957 : 60-1).

#### 2.2.1.4 CIRCULATING LIBRARIES

The first commercial subscription or circulating library appeared in Edinburgh in 1725, and was run as a profitable sideline to another commercial venture. Here books were rented out at a penny or so per night, and the enterprise found immediate popularity. The clientele of such libraries included tradesmen, artisans and domestic servants, all of whom had had two or more years of schooling. More importantly, readers included women of the middle and upper social levels, for whom education at that time was very superficial. Such women had servants, and hence time on their hands to read. The circulating library's basic book stock was the 'ordinary novel', and it is this form of literature, perhaps more than any other, that in Altick's view 'helped democratize reading' in the eighteenth century (Altick, 1957 : 45, 60-63, 217).

Perhaps as a reflection of the social changes taking place in Britain in the eighteenth century, the term 'class' began to lose its purely educational meaning and acquired a new social connotation, which to some extent displaced the term 'rank'. Early in this century the term 'lower classes' came into use, followed towards the end of the century by 'higher and middle classes'. By the 1820s these were joined by the terms 'working class and upper class' (Williams, 1958 : xv).

In terms of the popularity of the English novel, the earlier prototype of which may be considered to have been Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719), the publication of Samuel Richardson's work Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded in 1740-1 marked the beginning of a sudden growth in novel-writing which

lasted for some 30 years. Novelists, such as Fielding, Sterne and Smollett, were all influenced by Richardson's writings. Fielding in particular was to parody Pamela in his book Joseph Andrews (1742).<sup>\*</sup> Whereas Fielding's works were written from the standpoint of social consciousness (Allen, 1957 : 34-35, 40-41, 50-51), Richardson was a printer by trade who began writing for the express purpose of teaching others to read (Heppenstall, 1961 : 103). He too was, responsible for influencing thought in relation to the emotional feelings, and through his analysis of both the motive and emotion, he 'created the belief in the value of the emotion because it is felt (Allen, 1957 : 49).

Although strongly condemned by moralists of the period for such appeal to the emotions, Richardson's novels were in fact written from a highly moral standpoint, as a warning to the innocent and inexperienced of the evils of the world (Drinkwater, 1957 : 316).

Such condemnation was to be heaped upon circulating libraries as a whole, and their reading matter brought forth a great deal of 'anti-fiction' and 'anti-library' sentiment. The concern was directed more towards the newly literate, who, critics feared, would promote both sloth and sensuality, and were therefore viewed with considerable alarm. The prevailing attitudes of the time were perhaps most accurately captured by Sheridan in his play The Rivals (1775). Here such libraries were roundly criticised : 'A circulating library in a town is an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge. It blossoms throughout the year.....they who are so fond of

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\* Novel dates taken from Longman Companion to English Literature, 1972.

handling the leaves, will long for the fruit at last' (Altick, 1957 : 60-61; Sheridan, 1939 : 809).

The circulating library appears to have been the constant butt of controversy. From the point of view of churchmen, such books were profane - and considered a corrupting influence on the morals of the young (Minto, 1932 : 38-39), but such controversy had its origins in the prejudice against reading for entertainment rather than for a serious purpose (cf 2.2.1.2). Such books were condemned not only on the grounds that they corrupted the young and the lower classes generally, but that their reading led to the neglect of serious literature (Altick, 1957 : 63-65, 218n, 231; Kaufman, 1969 : 188-89).

The commercial circulating library enjoyed a relatively long history. Eventually many were bought out, acquired or simply taken over by municipal authorities, thus also becoming forerunners of the public library. However, it was not until the 1960s that rising prices finally caused the demise of such famous libraries as W H Smith's and Boots' Booklovers Library (Kelly, 1973 : 66, 74, 166, 188, 344).

#### 2.2.1.5 MECHANICS' INSTITUTES

In 1800, in response to interest shown by instrument makers in the scientific principles of their trade, Dr George Birkbeck, of the Andersonian Institute of Glasgow, began a series of lectures to mechanics, or skilled artisans. These proved so popular that within four years

Birkbeck was lecturing to audiences of some seven hundred students at a time (Minto, 1932 : 41).

Similar institutes were established throughout Britain during the next twenty years, and a survey for the year 1849 shows that there were four hundred institutes at the time, possessing a joint book stock of approximately 350 000 books and boasting an annual issue rate of over a million (Ogle, 1897 : 9). By 1869 there were some seven hundred institutes in existence, providing lectures, circulating-type libraries and reading rooms and generally managed by a committee drawn from the mechanics themselves (Minto, 1932 : 45-46).

In a period when poverty and ignorance were rampant, reformers such as Henry Brougham and his associates saw scientific education as an important factor in solving such serious problems. Thus the Mechanics' Institutes represented the adult section of the educational programme that Brougham and his colleagues had in mind for the 'English masses'. Such education, he was convinced, would make men happier and more industrious and not only act as a counter to superstition, so prevalent among the lower classes, but more particularly would combat the spread of more radical political ideas. Book stocks were to a certain extent limited by what was considered suitable for working men to read, and the provision of works of literature, drama and especially novels was seen as self-defeating and the conflict between demand and provision caused considerable difficulties (Altick, 1957 : 188-89, 194-95).

The greatest limitation in the success of such adult educational programmes was the low level of education of the students (Minto, 1932 : 46), most of whom were ill-equipped to comprehend the standard of lectures offered. The problem was compounded by the inexperience of the lecturers in communicating with such an audience. Secondly, the assumption that basic education could start in adult life was perhaps unrealistic, and it was found that what uneducated men tended to prefer after a hard day's work, was not more work, but rather some form of diversion. Eventually the Institutes were forced to relax the limitation to scientific works only, some even suggesting that a few works of fiction would act as 'bait' to non-readers, to encourage men to use the library and then introduce them to serious reading. Eventually this attitude was to drive the working men away from the libraries, and to admit in their place members of a slightly higher social level, which included clerks and small businessmen. Paradoxically, the libraries then started to stock the very type of books which had been denied the original members. In the face of demand for 'general' literature i.e. popular fiction, libraries had to either acquiesce or close from lack of use.

It was precisely this problem of 'light literature' that was transferred to the new rate-supported libraries as a continuing controversy. Even by the mid-nineteenth century the old prejudices against reading for entertainment persisted, yet it was considered that if reading was to be rate-assisted it must be for a 'serious purpose' (cf 2.2.1.4). Such an argument was much used by those who opposed the establishment of free public libraries. Thus the 'fiction question' which had troubled the Mechanics' Institutes moved into the arena of the public libraries whose

popularity reflected a direct relationship to the amount of fiction that the library made available (Altick, 1957 : 188-98, 231).

To a certain extent the functions, and in many instances the book stocks, of both the Mechanic's Institutes and the subscription libraries were passed on to the new public libraries. The libraries of some Mechanics' Institutes ultimately became the nucleus of academic establishments, but mainly they were either bought, or acquired by settlement of debt, by municipal authorities (Kelly, 1973 : 74, 160, 166, 275).

#### 2.2.2 POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO THE PUBLIC LIBRARY ACT OF 1850

Two political reformers were instrumental in drafting and in the passing of the 1850 Public Libraries Act. They were the member of Parliament for Dumfries, William Ewart (1793 - 1869), who had served as a member of the committee which considered the affairs of the British Museum in 1835, and Joseph Brotherton (1783 - 1857), who was elected as member of Parliament for Salford in 1832. Brotherton was the son of a wealthy mill owner and, having amassed a fortune at an early age, retired to devote his life to public affairs (Minto, 1932 : 306-7; Kelly, 1973 : 7).

Ewart's involvement with public libraries started with his interest in industrial design, which led to his being made chairman of the Committee on Arts and Manufactures. This Committee was instrumental in setting up schools of industrial design and recommended the founding of public museums and art galleries. From this point Ewart was to extend his philanthropic ideals to the notion of public libraries as 'institutes for

promoting knowledge'. As a consequence, in the House of Commons, he raised the issue of the need for public libraries several times. In 1844, at a public meeting held under the auspices of the Manchester School of Design, it was proposed that the town should be empowered to establish and support museums by means of a so-called 'penny rate' taxation. Brotherton who was present at the meeting, brought this proposal to the attention of Ewart. Eventually it was to be of fundamental importance in the passing of the Museums Act of 1845 in which both men were closely involved. This Act, in turn, was of particular importance to future public libraries, as it served as a model for the Public Libraries Act of 1850 (cf 2.2.2.2) (Ogle, 1897 : 10; Kelly, 1973 : 10-12).

The Museums Act of 1845 empowered any municipal authority with a population greater than 10 000 inhabitants, to establish museums. One half-penny in the pound was levied on the rates but was to be used for buildings only, while it was permitted that one penny could be charged as an entrance fee. Several museums were subsequently established, including Canterbury in 1847, Warrington in 1848 and Salford in 1850.

These three towns contrived to take a wider interpretation of the Act, by adding books to the museums attractions, thus becoming pioneer rate-aided libraries in the first phase of reform (Kelly, 1973 : 10-11, 23).

#### 2.2.2.1 EVIDENCE BEFORE THE SELECT COMMITTEE

In 1848 Edward Edwards (then assistant in the Department of Printed Books at the British Museum, and later librarian of Manchester Public Library)



published a paper which compared the provision of public libraries of Britain unfavourably with that in other countries. This paper came to the notice of Ewart, who used the evidence it contained to obtain the appointment of a Select Committee of the House of Commons on the subject of public libraries (Ogle, 1897 : 11-12).

Ewart and Edwards then worked carefully together, with the support of Brotherton, to plan a strategy and provide evidence and witnesses for the Committee. Some five hundred questions and answers as well as a host of statistics were assembled to support their evidence. The Select Committee met in March 1849, and William Ewart was elected chairman. Present were leading British and European librarians who had come to hear Edward Edwards, the principal witness, lay his statistics before the committee (Kelly, 1973 : 11-12).

The evidence supported the need for free, rate-supported public libraries by exposing the ineffectiveness of those which existed, proving that the latter, in fact, did not cater for all sections of the community (cf 2.2.1). Library materials were generally of a scholarly or theological nature (cf 2.2.1.1) and education qualifications or an introduction was a prerequisite for access, and many were in a sadly delapidated condition due to lack of proper financing for maintenance and development (Altick, 1957 : 214-5). The matter of cost was also raised, and it was suggested that despite the existence of good subscription libraries and the Mechanics' Institutes, the majority of the working classes could not afford to pay for the loan of library books issued by these and other

contemporary institutions - in fact any form of charge constituted an obstacle (Murison, 1955 : 41).

However, this evidence contained several implicit assumptions, and no actual evidence was submitted to substantiate the underlying notions of popular demand: of the working classes having a hunger for knowledge, or indeed of public libraries likely to be well used once established. The evidence went to considerable pains to reason, what Murison suggests was in the manner of a rather tortuous argument, that public use was proved by the lengths to which the members of the public themselves were prepared to go to obtain books, so demonstrating the degree of their needs (Murison, 1955 : 36; Altick, 1957 : 225).

In the main the evidence presented to the Committee tended to be negative, since the potential role of free public libraries was cited as a counter to the social evils of the time, rather than as a positive agency needed for the benefit of society in general (Murison, 1955 : 29).

The leading argument was presented by Brotherton, who expanded the negative theme by proposing that public libraries would help prevent crime (Minto, 1932 : 306-7). This argument presented public libraries as a form of insurance not only against crime but against public disorder in general. As such, it played directly on the current fears of revolution related to the recent Chartist riots of 1847, which were part of a national working-class movement of 1837-1848. These fears gave rise to the prevailing public opinion that the printed word in the wrong hands would only promote further sedition (Altick, 1957 : 72, 225).

Arguments for the provision of recreational reading were particularly influenced by these attitudes and were thus twofold. First, as crime and drinking were generally linked by association in people's minds, the provision of more constructive facilities for recreation to the working man's more limited and assumed 'debased' pursuits was proposed. Second, to prevent the working masses from reading what was considered to be politically or morally undesirable literature, it was believed that recreational reading through the public library might thus divert workers' leisure-time occupation into more harmless channels (Murison, 1955 : 52-53, 129-30).

The mode of establishment that the new public libraries might take was suggested by Edwards, who recommended that the Museums Act of 1845 (permitting the levying of money on rates for the establishment of museums) be extended to include public libraries, and that the Committee of the Privy Council, which dealt with education, should become the national fiscal and administrative authority for newly-established public libraries (Minto, 1932 : 52-53).

The Report of the Select Committee was presented to the House of Commons in July 1848. It stressed several important aspects, such as that there was a national need for better public libraries, that British libraries lagged far behind those in Europe and in the United States, and that students were often obliged to travel abroad for information for their studies and research. Proof that people were ready to profit from the services of an institution such as a public library, was deduced from the success of the Mechanics' Institutes, which, it was stated, were run by

working men for their own benefit (cf 2.2.1.5). The importance of a fixed and secure place of deposit was also raised, and it was proposed that the organising of such a place should constitute the first step (cf 2.2.1.2). An alliance between museums and public libraries was regarded as mutually beneficial and the Report recommended that the Museums Act be extended (Minto, 1932 : 71-77).

#### 2.2.2.2 THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES BILL 1850

The Public Libraries Bill was introduced in the House of Commons in February 1850 by William Ewart. It met with considerable opposition. The majority of critical arguments related to such practical matters as finance, taxation and the social benefit of public libraries. Fears were raised concerning the idea of increased taxation, as being imposed without consent of the taxpayers; of possible adverse effects of taxation on private enterprise; and the possibility that public libraries would promote agitation. Brotherton responded to the latter point of criticism in a rather expansive statement, claiming that by helping to lower the crime rate the public library in fact would contribute to the need for the cheapest police force possible (Kelly 1973 : 14-15; Ogle, 1879 : 18).

The debate centred largely on the financial aspects. Opponents argued, inter alia, that as the levy rate would be raised from all members of society regardless of whether or not public library facilities would be used, it would be unjust to tax the whole community for the benefit of the few. It was suggested frequently that the levy would be insufficient for the implementation of such a service, resulting in rate increases in the

future - a fear which was unhappily to be realised soon afterwards and one which was to prove a limiting factor to development for many years (Minto, 1932 : 48-56).

The 'half penny' which was such an important factor in the Public Libraries Bill discussion, referred to the limit on the amount of money a municipal authority was permitted to obtain from its rates for the purpose of supporting a public library. Being such a small amount, municipal authorities did not rush to adopt the Act, considering that the proprietary libraries could give a better service. By 1852 Liverpool had managed, with the help of local Acts, to increase the limitation to a penny rate, a strategy which was copied by several other local authorities (Munford, 1951 : 29).

The Member of Parliament for Lincoln, Col. Sibthorpe, a particularly vociferous opponent of the Bill, not only objected to any more tax increases on the already over-burdened taxpayer, but raised the crucial argument as to whether public funds for recreational activities were really justified (Kelly, 1977 : 14; Altick, 1957 : 226, 234).

In his rejoinder, Ewart pointed out that the Government was not being asked to contribute money from its own coffers, but that such libraries might be legally 'founded by the people, supported by the people and enjoyed by the people' (Ogle, 1897 : 16-17).

The Bill became law on the 14th August 1850, superseding the Museums Act of 1845 (cf 2.2.2). The new Act empowered such authorities to purchase

land and buildings, and to renovate existing premises for the purpose, but not to provide books. The annual levy on the rates was set at one half-penny in the pound. The degree of vehement opposition and parsimony displayed in the House of Commons is commented upon by Minto, who draws attention to the fact that it was still considered dangerous to educate the masses at the time, lest they develop false notions about their true social position in life (Minto, 1932 : 47-48, 93-95).

The Act was the first of many of its kind, some eighteen more amendments having been passed by the end of the century. These subsequent acts were largely aimed at modifying the limitations imposed by this original Act of 1850 (Kelly, 1973 : 20).

### 2.2.3 THE PUBLIC LIBRARY, 1850 - 1919 : Early developmental problems.

Following the frequent and necessary changes to the Public Libraries Act during the second half of the nineteenth century, it became evident that the local authorities were not unduly eager to adopt the original Act and its amendments - also that, far from providing the firm foundations required, municipal authorities proved little different in terms of the quality of management to that of the precursors of the free rate-supported libraries. Hence relatively little development took place (cf 2.2.1.1 - 2.2.1.5). In this regard it was not so much due to the lack of sufficient financial support, although this was meagre, as to municipal indifference (Minto, 1932 : 47, 96, 160-61; Kelly, 1973 : 16). However the combination of inadequate funding with such indifference contributed significantly to

the creation of problems such as unsuitable staffing and accommodation for public libraries (Munford, 1951 : 93-94).

As a result inter alia of employing unqualified labour, local authorities were instrumental in creating a poor image, not only of the public library service as such, but of librarianship in general (Murison, 1955 : 129).

However, despite the early set-backs, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century certain measures in aid of social reform had helped to increase the demand for reading and books. The Reform Act of 1867 had served to enfranchise most of the male population, while the Education Act of 1870 had established the principle of universal elementary education. Such reforms were responsible eventually for an increased demand for reading facilities, but the public library was hampered by the lack of suitable local governing machinery, as the basic existing unit - the parish - was inadequate to meet this new demand (Kelly, 1973 : 19).

In evaluating the use made of the new public libraries, a central issue in the evidence before the Select Committee (cf 2.2.2.1), it was soon discovered that the warning of Col Sibthorpe and other parliamentarians (cf 2.2.2.2) in regard to readers' propensity for recreational reading rather than educational, was indeed vindicated. Issue statistics from such libraries as Sheffield showed that as early as the period 1856 to 1867, fiction accounted for almost 50% of all issues, and that by the 1890s most public libraries were reporting fiction issue rates of between 65% and 90%. Moreover, a direct relationship between the popularity of the library and light fiction issue rates and the number of fiction works

the library concerned provided was discernible. Not all libraries decried such statistics, however. Liverpool in 1852 acknowledged the value of fiction reading as a means of encouraging their readers to acquire a taste for knowledge and good literature, a form of justification which was shared by Birmingham Public Library and Salford Public Library, who in 1856 recorded that readers of light reading were being attracted to 'good' literature and biographies. Thus it would appear that the 'fiction problem', of the preference for fiction as opposed to one for presumed educationally superior available reading (2.2.1.5), had also been inherited by the new public library.

This so-called 'fiction problem' is defined by Altick as the inability of library staff to determine the extent to which they should provide what they considered the best for the public and the extent they should accede to their manifest demands. In the event they chose to avoid losing readers and to suffer the accusations from outspoken members of the public and press that they were providing reading matter which contained 'light literature', i.e. implying sentimental or sensational fiction - also termed 'literature trash', whose evils were claimed to include the disordering of the mind, family neglect, crime and sloth. Thus, concerning the right of the public library to provide imaginative literature free, the critics argued: why then not free theatres, sport facilities or even free bread and circuses? In effect, the inherited 'fiction problem' became a useful stick with which to beat the public library. So important did this issue become that the Library Association (cf 2.2.3.1) held an early symposium in 1889 on the continuing problem (Altick, 1957 : 44-51, 230-34).



### 2.2.3.1 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION IN 1877

The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of a second generation of librarians in Britain, and concomitantly the need for enhanced professional abilities and expertise became evident. This need was instrumental to the formation of the Library Association in 1877. The stated aims of the new Association were: "to unite all persons engaged in or interested in library work, for the purpose of promoting the best possible administration of existing libraries and the formation of new ones where desirable" (Transactions ... Conference of Librarians, 1877 : 179).

In America a conference of librarians, held in Philadelphia in 1876, had successfully established the American Library Association (cf 2.3.1.7). A similar conference convened in London in the following year in April had laid the foundations for the establishment of the British Library Association in October of the same year (Ogle, 1897 : 43-45; Kelly, 1973: 101).

From the beginning the Library Association attracted to its membership librarians from the academic institutions rather than public libraries, as well as men of letters and non-professional persons engaged in library work. Annual meetings were convened to enable librarians to meet and hold formal discussions, and exchange informal ideas on matters of mutual concern. To this end special committees were set up to investigate and report on the state of the art. In terms of qualifications, which were considered essential for librarians, it was not until the fifth annual

meeting in 1882 that the issue of professional standards and proper training was raised (Minto, 1932 : 162, 168, 170-71, 176-77).

The professional experience of librarians at the foundation of the public library service was one of great variation, but it was obvious right from the beginning the public libraries failed to attract the best minds to the service from the universities, a state of affairs which was almost entirely due to the lack of sufficient finance (Munford, 1951 : 72-75).

The concept of professionalization, seen as 'the tendency of various occupations to attempt to acquire professional status' (Wilensky, 1965 : 141), is a complex one and involves several interrelated aspects. These may be considered as the desire to control all areas in an effort to raise the standards of expertise and service. Such a desire is often motivated by the need to improve the social status and is accompanied by the creation of standards of excellence (Blumer, 1966 : xi).

Thus in an effort to improve the standard of the library service, proposals for training were put forward, and a system of certification based upon examinations was approved in 1882 (Kelly, 1973 : 103-4). Various courses were offered, but it was not until 1919 that a full-time programme for honours graduates was available from the University College of London (Murison, 1955 : 131).

Following the problems experienced by public libraries concerning the vexing question of fiction reading, the Library Association held a symposium in 1889. Generally librarians found themselves in the difficult

position of deciding whether to reaffirm the traditional professional view by providing the kind of library material they considered best for their public, while running the risk of alienating many of their users, or to opt for satisfying manifestly popular public tastes, which laid them open to all kinds of criticism (cf 2.2.3). Attitudes to fiction reading were still very rigid and were expressed by W S Jevons, an influential librarian, who had earlier voiced the opinion, shared by many of his colleagues, that novels tended to distort the realities of life, replacing these with sensuous substitutes. Although this opinion was criticised at the time, it served to emphasise the commonly held notion that fiction reading was somehow deleterious to the reader. In spite of this attitude, the Library Association symposium came to the almost unanimous conclusion that the public library should provide material for both study and diversion (Altick, 1957 : 230-33).

The lack of any serious achievement by the Library Association in its early years is considered to have stemmed principally from internal dissension, which tended to diminish its potential and leave its objective unresolved (Murison, 1955 : 69; McColvin, 1942 : v)

However, the Library Association did have more success in becoming the focal point for development of the public library movement by providing a much needed liaison between the public library and its many benefactors, of whom Andrew Carnegie and John Passmore Edwards were the most prominent (Minto, 1932 : 161-62).

#### 2.2.3.2 ANDREW CARNEGIE'S CONTRIBUTION TO PUBLIC LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT IN BRITAIN

Andrew Carnegie (1835 - 1919), the owner of one of the largest iron and steel empires in the world, was born in Scotland and came to the United States as a child. He retired in 1901, having already engaged in philanthropic work for many years in most of the English-speaking countries of the world. Regarding the public library as the most useful facility to any community, he set about establishing public libraries, first in his native Scotland in 1886, and later in England (Ogle, 1897 : 112-14).

Carnegie laid down a carefully formalised procedure for grants, in terms of which the money was not to be used for the purchase of books, but rather for building and equipment only. The local authorities were required to take responsibility for running costs, stocking and maintenance. They were also specifically required to adopt the Library Act, then to submit plans. By this means, Carnegie hoped to encourage the fullest participation by the local authorities. Through his efforts he was able to provide some 2 800 library buildings throughout the English-speaking world. Carnegie insisted on adherence to his specified rules and procedures and it is said that by 1919 half the public libraries in Britain and three-quarters of the public libraries in Scotland owed their establishment to him (Kelly, 1973 : 117).

Carnegie's benevolence had the effect of reversing the rather unenthusiastic attitudes of local authorities towards the establishment of

public libraries, and his name became synonymous with public libraries, his efforts providing a solid foundation for the development of the service on a national scale (Murison, 1955 : 88). Perhaps Carnegie's greatest contribution was the creation of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust in 1913, which was established with a capital of some 2 000 000 pounds (Kelly, 1973 : 116; Thorton, 1941 : 113). Aimed at social improvement, the Trust was directed by Carnegie to consider the establishment of public libraries as a priority in terms of the elevation of the masses (Kelly, 1973 : 116).

Of great significance to public library development was the report commissioned by the Trust to ascertain where their aid could be most effectively employed. The Report, presented in 1915 by Professor W G S Adams of Oxford, stated that the most pressing need for public libraries was in rural areas. It also made the important statement that the parish unit (cf 2.2.3) was too small to organise public libraries and recommended that such responsibilities should be transferred to county authorities. When it was subsequently discovered that such authorities were not legally empowered to become library authorities, the Carnegie Trust made representations through the Education Board to effect a change in the legislation. This was achieved in the new Library Act of 1919 (Minto, 1932 : 275-76).

This Act marked the end of an era, and by finally lifting the last limitation imposed by the Library Act of 1850, all controls were removed on the amount that could be levied by authorities on the rates, thus

ending the long, crippling 'penny-rate' basis for public library funding (Kelly, 1973 : 209; Minto, 1932 : 125-27).

#### 2.2.4 PUBLIC LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE WARS : 1920s & 1930s

This period was marked by two major historical events - the Great Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, with its accompanying high unemployment, and the start of political unrest in Germany, which ultimately led to the Second World War. Although public library development was hampered by cuts in finance and lost much of the expected benefits from the abolition of the penny rate, and despite the inhospitable economic climate government expenditure on museums and public libraries almost doubled. Unexpectedly the public library was to gain many library users by providing a much-needed place for the unemployed to pass the time (Kelly, 1973 : 217, 255-57).

This period also saw a great deal of research into every aspect of public library operation, providing a necessary and solid framework upon which to base future development. Following the Adams Report of 1915 (cf 2.2.3.2), the Carnegie Trust produced the Mitchell Report in 1924. In this Report Mitchell examined the state of public libraries, drawing specific attention inter alia to a lack of properly trained staff, inadequate salaries to attract suitable new staff, and a lack of balance in the bookstock. He also suggested that library committee members were more interested in avoiding any increase in the rates rather than understanding the workings and needs of the public library. Mitchell not only suggested improvements but emphasised the need for library co-operation and inter-

lending, particularly with organisations concerned with teaching and adult education. These issues were to become an integral part of the next major report on public libraries, which was presented by Sir Frederic Kenyon in 1927 (Munford, 1951 : 49-51).

Under the auspices of the Education Board, Sir Frederic G Kenyon, Librarian of the British Museum, presented one of the most comprehensive and far-reaching reports on public librarianship. It stressed the need for improvement in co-operation among authorities, and recommended that there be larger library units of administration and, ultimately, a co-ordinated national library service (Munford, 1951 : 50-53; Kelly, 1973 : 237-38; Murison, 1955 : 89-90).

The lending library and reading room was found to be the most popular area of the public library and was not only the main point of contact with its public but also the one on which judgement of the entire library service was made. The open-access system, as encouraged by the Carnegie Trust, was seen as advantageous in enabling users to browse. Fiction statistics were also included, and whereas fiction was found to account for only 37% of the total book stock of the counties' public libraries, it represented a massive 78% of all issues. It should be noted in passing that this significant contradiction between supply and demand in public libraries received no particular comment in the Report (Kelly, 1973 : 237-39).

A serious attempt was also made to define public library objectives, which were generally considered as being the promotion of good citizenship. The public library was seen as the cultural centre of its area, catering to

all levels of knowledge needs - which ranged from advanced research to simple curiosity. Opportunities for relaxation and recreation, it declared, should also be provided. These were considered as among the most important functions of the public library, and in this respect two distinct levels of literary complexity were defined. Firstly, literature for 'intelligent refreshment', and secondly literature of less intellectual appeal, acceptable only on the grounds that it should lead to improved reading as 'a' foundation to better things' or at the very least in preference to other leisure pursuits (Murison, 1955 : 90-91).

In the pre-war years of 1937-39, a detailed picture of the state of public libraries in Britain emerged from an ambitious survey carried out by the Library Association. This was part of a larger survey of Europe and the United States and was partly financed by the Rockefeller Foundation. By means of tours of inspection, carried out only over a short period of time, a large amount of information was gathered, though of a rather unequal quality. This was carefully edited into one volume by the then honorary secretary of the Library Association, Lionel McColvin (Munford, 1977 : 203-4).

Generally a rather grim picture was presented, depicting worn-out book stock, underpaid and underqualified staff and depressing buildings. On the positive side, however, note was taken of the new schemes for re-organisation brought about by the efforts of the new county library systems. Such authorities established county libraries which in turn developed branches, and provided travelling services to the rural areas. New ideas began to emerge : for example, children's libraries and a wide



range of extension services were established. During this period considerable thought was given to which members of the community actually used the public library (cf Chapter 4), and of ways of reaching more of the literate population. Attention was also given to the notion of balanced book stocks and the extent to which public demand could be acceded to (cf 2.2.1.5), accompanied by old arguments regarding the popularity of fiction reading (cf 2.2.1.4) (Kelly, 1973 : 272-76, 280-85, 292).

#### 2.2.5 THE WAR YEARS AND RECONSTRUCTION - the 1940s and 1950s

The war years of 1939 to 1944 brought about many changes, including population movements, which seriously strained the libraries' meagre resources and depleted man-power by the call-up into the Forces. All building ceased and several major libraries were lost through bomb damage. The prices of books spiralled and everything was in short supply (Kelly, 1973 : 327-33).

In full realisation of the need for reconstruction after the War, McColvin published a report in 1942 under the auspices of the Library Association in which proposals for a clear-cut scheme to put into operation as soon as the War had ended, were presented (McColvin, 1942 : v-viii). In essence, this Report raised little new information not already covered by the Library Association's Report of the mid-1930s (Kelly, 1973 : 335), but McColvin's reconstruction proposals were principally aimed at the formation of larger library units, which, he argued, would be in a

stronger position to provide a better and more professional system for public libraries (McColvin, 1942 : 195-97).

Although the optimum size was another long-disputed public library question, which was not fully solved until the 1960s, this period did make considerable progress in library co-operation, forging links with the various other public, special, academic, commercial and industrial libraries. Also one of the first information services was established in 1948, viz the Manchester Technical Information Service (MANTIS) (Kelly, 1977 : 391).

#### 2.2.6 MODERN PUBLIC LIBRARY DEVELOPMENTS : 1960s and 1970s

During this period there appears to be an over-interest in, and emphasis on, technological development in libraries, to the detriment of research relating to the basic issues of public libraries. In the main such developments were in response to the rapidly accelerating increase in the number of books and journals published annually, and the concomitant need to develop some means of controlling them effectively and efficiently. Ideally, it was the acknowledgement that every library, regardless of size, should have adequate means of access. Although advanced technology was being developed to meet the needs of information control, public libraries were to benefit in the establishment of inter-library lending and co-operative purchasing between libraries (Filon, 1977 : 5-6).

The assessment of co-operative lending was the central issue of the Parry Report of 1967, prepared under the auspices of the University Grants

Commission (Kelly, 1977 : 449). The Report stated that universities were unable to meet the needs of their users, particularly those engaged in research work. To this end it made radical recommendations which involved not only library co-operation but because in the Report's opinion the country lacked a "true apex" to the library service (Kelly, 1977 : 449), the amalgamation of the National Central Library and the National Lending Library for Science and Technology to ultimately form a national library (Filon, 1977 : 114). To this end the Parry Report and also the Dainton Report of 1969 considered that the British Museum Library should form the foundation of such a national service. Its functions and responsibilities would include the organisation of an inter-loan service, the publication of a National Bibliography, and the organisation and collection of the country's literature. In 1973 the British Library came into existence, and was composed of three separate divisions: Lending, Reference and Bibliographic (Kelly, 1977 : 449).

Public Library aims and objectives came under revision in the early 1970s, and in 1971 the ALA public library objectives of 1943 were reformulated (cf 3.1.2). Also during this period the long-awaited reform of local government came into being with the Acts promulgated in 1972 - 1974. These abolished the county and smaller units of administration, and established six metropolitan counties, and thirty-nine non-metropolitan counties, all of which not only had library powers but were education authorities as well. By 1977, some of the new technological developments were being utilised by a number of public libraries, with thirty of these library authorities already using computers at the issue desk (Kelly, 1977 : 455, 447-48).

The growing importance of information as a source of economic and social progress was emphasised at the 1976 ASLIB seminar, 'Information in the 1980s', where it was suggested that this resource demanded proper management and planning for the future if libraries wished to retain control (ASLIB, 1976 : 1). But the relationship of this vital resource and public libraries was raised by the Secretary of State for Education and Science, who questioned whether libraries and information services should form one service or follow independent directions (MacFarlane, 1980 : 215-20).

Public libraries' involvement in the field of information services had suffered a setback as long ago as 1939, when many new local information bureaux (and archives) were established. Murison suggests that because of a lack of effectiveness in the public library's ability to organise a suitable service, local authorities either made entirely new utilities or gave the responsibilities to new and more alert social services (Murison, 1955 : 123-24). Nearly a quarter of a century later, in 1982, Thomson was to warn public libraries and their reference functions that unless they accepted the challenges brought about by the new developments in the provision of information for their communities, they would be 'taking a further step backwards into obscurity and irrelevance' (Thomson, 1982 : 101).

This possible lack of relevance may further be observed in a state-of-the-art publication on user studies from the University of Sheffield's Centre for Research and User Studies in the mid-1970's. Here it is apparent that public libraries not only maintain a low profile but also display

little research interest. In the extensive bibliography of some 305 entries, only 3,6% related directly to public libraries and as far as could be ascertained a further 7,2% related indirectly to some form of leisure or non-academic reading. The balance involved information in the fields of social sciences, science and technology and communication called for by academic and technological users (Ford, 1977 : 73-92).

## 2.3      THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

### 2.3.1    INTRODUCTION

At the time of the creation of public libraries in Great Britain and Europe, the United States of America had no direct heritage of royal, university or monastic libraries to act as a foundation or to influence the direction of a public library service (Munthe, 1939 : 17). Nonetheless, public libraries speedily attained recognition among Americans who, early in the struggle to develop the country, realised the importance of books to personal and national progress (Predeek, 1947 : 83).

Early in the seventeenth century several British companies founded colonies in North America, and in 1620 the Pilgrim Fathers arrived from Plymouth, England, as the first of many British immigrants to settle on the Massachusetts coast (Revil, 1953 : 469), thus giving New England its predominantly English character (Shera, 1949 : 2-3). New England also became the dispersal point of population to other states, particularly westwards, so effectively disseminating both economic and cultural traditions. Several factors were to influence the establishment of a public library service in New England. These included early, relatively rapid urbanisation, and an increase of leisure-time, which, in turn, generated a degree of cultural enterprise (Shera, 1949 : 7).

During the seventeenth century many libraries connected to church and parish were established, and by the early eighteenth century town libraries began to appear; by 1835 subscription libraries and simple cooperative book club social libraries followed and district school libraries had been established. As in Great Britain, the free public library movement began in the middle of the nineteenth century (Bostwick, 1929 : 5-8).

#### 2.3.1.1 EARLY LIBRARIES IN PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

In the beginning private libraries and collections of books, of necessity, had to be exported to the new American colonies. One of the most notable of these belonged to John Winthrop Jr., whose collections of some 1 000 books on scientific topics became the foundation of one of the most influential scientific libraries in the American colonies during the seventeenth century (Stone, 1977 : 57).

Early libraries were established by patrons or benefactors who had foresight, one of whom was Captain Robert Keayne. From money bequeathed for the purpose after his death in 1655, the Boston Town House was built and contained a room specifically set aside as a library. This building was regarded by the public as belonging to the city, and was known as the 'public library'. As such it was considered to be the forerunner of the Boston Public Library, established almost two centuries later (cf 2.3.1.6) (Shera, 1949 : 20-22).

In terms of the definition of the public library as a book collection backed by public support and under public control for its own use, there were very few such libraries before 1850, though tentative steps in that direction were already apparent. The collection of Caleb Bingham, who donated his library to the town of Salisbury, Connecticut, in 1800, has survived as part of the Scoville Memorial Library. Another in Lexington, Massachusetts dates to 1827, when the town voted to purchase a library for the youth of the city. Unhappily support soon began to wane, and the library ceased by 1839. A pioneer library, established in Peterborough, New Hampshire, in 1833 was more fortunate. With the aid of the State Library Fund and donations, this small library - housed in the local post office - grew to some 500 volumes by 1837. Although modest, it served as a prototype for the development of public libraries that were to follow in the succeeding decades (Johnson, 1966 : 136).

#### 2.3.1.2 PAROCHIAL LIBRARIES

Parish libraries owed their foundation mainly to Dr Thomas Bray (founder of the S P C K), who had earlier established a similar parochial library system in Britain (cf 2.2.1.2). Appointed as the Commissary for the Church of England in Maryland in 1695 by the Bishop of London, from 1700 onwards Bray opened his 'lending layman's libraries' at Newport, Rhode Island and the parish libraries in Connecticut and New Hampshire (Shera, 1949 : 27-28).

These libraries were of a strictly religious nature, being designed to redress what Bray considered to be a weakness in religious instruction,



and were sent to many parishes in New England. Bray distinguished two types of library, viz the 'standing library', which was a form of reference library, and a 'colonial library' - a type of lending library from which books might be borrowed to supplement those of the former. This constituted a novel idea. However, although Bray's schemes focussed attention on the need for books, the system was to fail as did those in Britain, as a result of a lack of adequate size, and insufficient provision for maintenance and administration (Stone, 1977 : 127-29).

In most churches a small 'Sunday school library' was to be found. Larger urban churches often boasted a library room, which contained works of an inspirational and religious nature, intended for adults rather than for children. Small colleges and academies, too, had collections of books, which frequently were the only libraries that their students would ever know (Johnson, 1966 : 138).

#### 2.3.1.3 SOCIAL SUBSCRIPTION AND CIRCULATING LIBRARIES

One of the earliest book clubs, or social libraries, in North America was founded in 1727 by Benjamin Franklin (1706 - 1790), a printer and journalist, who later became a renowned statesman. With the assistance of a group of friends, Franklin set up a private library club. However, the club was not as popular as he had hoped and it was eventually closed (Stone, 1977 : 59, 130-32).

Franklin saw libraries as a means of bringing culture to the less-educated, thus attempting to introduce a measure of democracy to

education. More specifically, however, he hoped to counter the limiting effects of the prevailing puritanical tradition by offering facilities for a more advanced level of education, which could extend culture through the arts and sciences. To this end a new library was organised along subscription lines, and in 1731 the fore-runner of American lending libraries, the Philadelphia Library Company, was established (Predeek, 1947 : 87).

Two main streams of library systems developed. The first of these was the voluntary organisation which enabled individuals to buy books for joint use. Registration and an annual fee was a prerequisite for these organisations, known as subscription libraries. The second type was a strictly commercial enterprise known as the circulating library, where books could be borrowed for fixed periods for a prescribed fee (Eaton, 1961 : viii - ix).

The two different forms of libraries tended to attract very different types of reader. The service orientation of the subscription library was the more consciously democratic of the two; it appealed to a wide public, and included book clubs for ladies, numerous young men's libraries and mercantile and apprentice libraries. Factories and mills, too, set up their own subscription libraries and charged a modest fee. Here, particularly, the demand for fiction reading was strong, and in common with developments in Britain, provided an outlet from the hard realities of long working hours (cf 2.2.1.5) (Shera, 1949 : 231-32).

By contrast, the proprietary library tended to appeal to a more scholarly clientele, and consequently attracted wealthy patrons and generous endowments. One of the most prestigious was the Boston Athenaeum, which was founded in 1807 (Predeek, 1947 : 90-92; Shera, 1949 : 59, 231).

The popularity of the social library lasted until almost the end of the nineteenth century, when the majority of libraries were no longer able to satisfy the needs of their readers. As a result most were eventually amalgamated with the larger municipal libraries (Predeek, 1947 : 91; Shera, 1949 : 247).

#### 2.3.1.4 DISTRICT SCHOOL LIBRARIES

The early public acceptance of the interrelatedness of education and culture, on the one hand, and books and libraries on the other, was responsible for the close links between schools and libraries in the United States. School laws of New York in 1812 recommended public library establishment, and in 1835 legislation was enacted to provide a tax levy for the administration of school libraries (Predeek, 1947 : 92).

Before 1850 it was principally these school district libraries which received public support and were controlled by local authorities. The Acts provided for state funds to match local levies for books, and by 1880 these libraries had a joint stock of some half a million books, and their concept had spread to several other states. However, these libraries were apparently aimed at parents and teachers rather than children, and an

unattractive bookstock and inadequate finance retarded the movement considerably (Johnson, 1966 : 137).

Although such libraries eventually failed, they were important precursors of the later formally conceived public library service in the United States (Predeek, 1947 : 92).

#### 2.3.1.5 MECHANICS' INSTITUTES AND LIBRARIES FOR SELF-EDUCATION

As in Great Britain, the dawning of the technological age in early nineteenth century America was accompanied by a population explosion (cf 2.2.1), congested cities, and, in the United States, a rapid increase in the working classes through immigration. All these factors contributed to the emergence of similar demands for increased knowledge, especially in the related fields of trade and industry. The demands led to the creation of several voluntary organisations to promote the welfare of the working men. These included trade unions, co-operatives, working men's political parties and the establishment of newspapers, journals, associations and libraries. An important factor in the increasing need for self-education was the disintegration of the time-honoured apprentice-master relationship, and, to meet such challenges, new libraries such as those attached to Mechanics' Institutes evolved (cf 2.2.1.5). Some of the earliest to appear were in Connecticut and Boston, between 1818 and 1820 (Shera, 1949 : 229-30).

At about this time mercantile libraries came into existence in many of the larger cities of the east coast. Their purpose was related to the needs

of the business houses and aimed in particular at their younger staff (Bostwick 1929 : 6). Another form of self-educational library was embodied in the Lyceum movement, which had no connection with the similarly named libraries in Britain (cf 2.2.1.3). These libraries were conceived as a wider educational agency for the general public, aimed at fostering a taste for reading, an ideal which had not met with success in the Mechanics' Institutes (cf 2.2.1.5). These libraries were relatively short-lived, and in common with other libraries lacked the proper resources to survive (Shera, 1949 : 226-28, 240).

#### 2.3.1.6 THE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

By the mid-nineteenth century most of the social libraries no longer satisfied the needs of the American population. Boston by this time was not only a well-established city, but considered the intellectual centre of the country - then known as the Northern or Federal States - and had become the focal point for the launching of the public library movement in North America. Its first step was taken in May 1849, when an annual tax-levy of five thousand dollars was raised for the maintenance of a public library in Boston (Predeek, 1947 : 92-93).

The City Council of Boston requested a report on the objectives which would be achieved by the establishment of a public library. The primary declared objectives of the Report, presented in 1852, were to assist the intellectual advancement of all members of the community. To this end, it proposed not only to publicise the public library to ensure the widest possible use, but to assemble a library large enough to satisfy the needs

of all Bostonians. Such a library would encourage a love of reading, a similar objective to that of the social libraries, which was approved of. However, the speculating, profit-making foundations, which characterised the circulating libraries was not (Shera, 1949 : 274, 277-78, 281-84).

The Boston Public Library opened on the 20th March 1854 and was administered by some of the city's most influential citizens. These included George Ticknor, a trustee of the Boston Athenaeum (cf 2.3.1.3) and leader of the wealthy intelligentsia, and Edward Everett, professor at Harvard University, Mayor of Boston and later Governor of Massachusetts (Harrison, 1961 : 37). In spite of the objectives stated in the Report of 1852, Everett wished the library to be a place primarily for academic research, whilst Ticknor believed it ought to be directed mainly at the working man. Ticknor's view appears to have been based entirely on his perceptions of the social situation of the period, during which floods of rough and uneducated immigrants were seen to pose a threat to the socio-political supremacy of the educated classes. Thus he saw the public library as a means of turning the immigrants into law-abiding citizens (cf 2.2.2.1) in Ticknor's own mould. More important, it was also to provide the type of books required by the educated classes to maintain their position (Harris, 1973 : 2510-511).

It thus seemed that, in the view of Harris and Spiegler, the élite of Boston were seeking to control the working masses (cf 2.2.1) during a time of social change and reform, by establishing the very institutions which generally sought to give such classes more freedom through self-education (Harris & Spiegler, 1974 : 252). However, whether or not this charge of

élitism is sufficiently substantiated by the full evidence, it would appear that such an institution could only be established within the conceptual framework and experience of its founders. It is therefore plausible to assume that friendly rivalry with New York, which in 1848 had received \$400 000 from John Jacob Astor for the establishment of a public library, constituted a more likely incentive to attempt retaining Boston's intellectual dominance (Shera, 1949 : 178).

New York's new Astor Library, incidentally, was not opened until 1854 and in 1885 it was amalgamated with the Lenox and Tilden libraries to form the New York Public Library (Stone, 1977 : 158).

Boston's successful lead in changing laws to allow the establishment of a public library encouraged some 27 states to follow the city's initiative and pass their own library laws. The next twenty years saw several important public library developments, many of which culminated in the conference of libraries held in the Centennial year celebrations in Philadelphia in 1876 (Harrison, 1961 : 36-37, 39).

#### 2.3.1.7 PUBLIC LIBRARY DEVELOPMENTS AND THE PHILADELPHIA CONFERENCE OF 1876

Although 1876, the year of the Philadelphia Conference, is usually considered as the beginning of the modern library movement in the United States, its roots lay in the events of the early 1850s with the passing of new library laws (which facilitated the setting up of public libraries), the opening of the Boston Public Library in 1852, and the first national

meeting of libraries held in 1853. The latter meeting, convened by Charles Coffin Jewett, then librarian of Boston Public Library and later of the Smithsonian Library, was attended by some 83 people. Basic library procedures and common problems were discussed, but two major points were raised which were to have very far-reaching implications for the development of libraries in the United States. The first pertained to the pressing need for a central national library, and the second to the formation of a professional librarians' association. A committee was appointed to investigate these matters, but the Civil War of 1861 intervened, delaying plans for reconstruction until 1876 (Johnson, 1966 : 169-70).

The Philadelphia Conference accomplished a great deal in the space of a few days. Its most important achievement was the launching of the American Library Association (A L A), with Samuel Swett Green, Librarian of Worcester (Massachusetts) Public Library, as first president. During the Conference, Samuel R Warren and S N Clark presented the first copy of The United States Bureau of Education's Report on Public Libraries in the United States of America. This two-part Report introduced two aspects of great importance to future library operation. In the first part, a public outline of Melvil Dewey's Decimal Classification and Subject Catalogue, appeared for the first time and, as Dewey was present, he was able to describe his new classification system personally. The second part of the Report presented Cutter's Rules for a Printed Dictionary Catalogue. Both systems were received enthusiastically and their significance to library work acknowledged.



In the same year the President of the A L A proposed the establishment of a national inter-library loan system, based on those already in use in Europe. The first recorded inter-library loan had been transacted in 1754 (i.e. some one hundred and twenty two years earlier) between the university libraries of Harvard and Yale (Stone, 1977 : 200-1, 255, 279).

#### 2.3.1.8 THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS AND THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

Three men who were particularly concerned with the adoption of orderly and standardised procedures in all the libraries in the country were Melvil Dewey (cf 2.3.1.7), John Cotton Dana and Herbert Putnam, whose approach embraced various aspects of library administration and procedures. One of the most important of these concerned the inadvertent duplication of library acquisitions, which resulted from the uncoordinated ordering of library material. These men recognised the need for a national controlling body to address itself to this and other pressing problems associated with lack of adequate cooperation among libraries, but with special reference to an inter-library loan network. The Library of Congress was considered the most suitable institution to fulfill the role of national coordination. Thus a process was set in motion which was to lead to the establishment of a national library (Goodrum, 1974 : 30).

The Library of Congress (L C) was established during the days of the Confederacy, to serve as a reference collection for the members of the Senate and House of Representatives. In 1700 it was housed in New York - the then capital and owned by the New York Corporation Library. In 1793, after the War of Independence, Congress moved to Philadelphia, where

Benjamin Franklin's subscription library took over the provision of reference books for Congressmen and Senators (cf 2.3.1.3) (Salamanca, 1942 : 23-26). With the building of the new federal capital in Washington D C in 1800, the Library was moved there and housed in the upper rooms of the Capitol Building (Johnson, 1966 : 160; Goodrum, 1974 : 9-11).

The future development of the L C was directed by two persons, whose names were among the most famous to be connected with the Library. The first was Ainsworth Rand Spofford (appointed Librarian in 1864) whose determination to develop the L C into a national library took 43 years of dedicated work. He finally achieved his goal through the reorganisation of the copyright laws in 1870. The second was Herbert Putnam (appointed to the L C in 1893 and succeeding Spofford in 1908), who sought some means to increase the L C's importance. He accomplished this in 1901 by providing catalogue cards to other libraries as a service. The transfer of the L C's reference function to the Congressional Research Service in 1915 left Putnam free to develop the L C into a centre for country-wide information - a concept which included the expanding of the inter-library loan service (Goodrum, 1974 : 40-45).

#### 2.3.1.9 THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY : Developments and problems

Towards the end of the nineteenth century public libraries saw a slow but steady growth, with New England and the Middle West leading the way. By 1875 Massachusetts had acquired 127 library collections, and the Middle Western states had achieved legislation authorising the establishment of

library services by countries and townships. In promoting such services, a significant step was the establishment of state library commission, the first of which was formed in Massachusetts in 1890. This example was soon followed by 16 other states. The function of such commissions was to encourage the establishment of public libraries, give advice on staff and to set up central clearing houses for information on libraries and books. In Massachusetts, where direct state aid was integral to the library legislation, it was the library commission which disbursed such aid (Johnson, 1966 : 171-72).

In common with British public libraries which experienced problems with justifying fiction reading (cf 2.2.3) the Boston Public Library trustees found themselves using similar arguments in favour of the stocking of fiction. This in particular included the educational viewpoint, that once users had acquired a taste for reading through the introduction of lighter literary forms, they would be led as a matter of course to those of history and biography. Later the trustees were to state that the provision of light literature for entertainment was not justifiable in terms of the educational objectives of the public library (Atkinson, 1981 : 7-10).

Evidence of the magnitude of the fiction-reading problem was provided for the Boston Public Library by Justin Winsor (who became Superintendent in 1868). His Examining Committee analyzed the reading of the Boston Public Library Lower Hall in 1866 and found that of the 183 000 volumes in circulation 68,2% were classified as 'Fiction and Juveniles'. The next highest category in public popularity was that of 'Science, Arts, and Profession'

which comprised a mere 6,6%. Earlier in 1857 the fiction circulated by the Boston Library accounted for five-eighths of all books issued while the New York Mercantile Library reported that three-quarters of all books purchased were novels. Three-quarters of the issues of the Boston Public Library in 1869 related to fiction, and in 1871 Winsor, as Librarian, provided a clear indication of the prevailing attitudes to such circulation figures. He wrote: 'concerning the question of the large amount of fiction read in popular libraries ... The multitude not only craves fiction, something imaginative as a counter-poise to the realities, often stern, of life, - but, ... being ... few trained imaginations, the style of fiction craved is often of a low order. ... but the general results for libraries will not vary, since new readers begin at the level from which old readers advance ... (Whitehill, 1956 : 73, 77, 82-83).

Here it is evident that the attitude towards fiction-reading is not only realistic but again perceived as educational, with the librarian guiding and encouraging the reader to progress up the scale of literary hierarchy. With such motives in mind, Whitehill himself constructed a list of historical reading, which he hoped 'might become the stepping-stones to the less imaginative works ... of the world's history'. Obviously supporting Winsor's attitude and at the same time offering his perception of the public library's role, he comments that missionaries are never going 'to run out of heathens to convert' (Whitehill, 1956 : 83).

The arguments for and against popular fiction were raised again at the librarians' convention in Philadelphia in 1876 (cf 2.3.1.6), when it was agreed that for the public library to become a stabilising influence in

the country the mass of the people must be encouraged to use it. Thus the provision of popular fiction was suggested as a 'carrot' to catch such users, although many librarians wished to ban fiction entirely from their shelves (Harris, 1973 : 2511).

Nearly 35 years later the fiction-reading situation and librarians' attitudes appear little changed. In a discussion on public library book selection Bostwick comments that it is 'a matter of grief to many librarians that their libraries circulated so high a percentage of fiction' (Bostwick, 1910 : 150).

### 2.3.2 PUBLIC LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT : The early 20th century

The early part of the twentieth century saw great progress in the provision of public library services, which had grown from somewhat 'experimental' origins in the nineteenth century to becoming a firmly established cultural institution. During the first decade a public library was established in most major cities. Branch libraries, too, were making their appearance in these cities, while the introduction of rural services was being investigated and tried out in some regions in the country (Kalisch, 1969 : 100; Johnson, 1966 : 238).

From the end of the nineteenth century to the outbreak of the First World War, in 1914, public library development was devoted mainly to aspects of social work, emphasis being placed on the needs of the poor, children, and the resettlement of foreign immigrants, all relating to the particular problems of the time. It heralded a 'progressive period' of public

library development which was expressed in three main ways. Firstly by the sponsoring of a wide range of activities termed 'library extension work'; by the specialization of children's reading by female staff members and finally by the attempting to 'americanise' the new immigrant (Garrison, 1979 : 206-7, 217).

Such new activities, in Garrison's viewpoint, stem from what she sees as the failure of public libraries to succeed in their moralist role 'to provide educational learning to the working class'. Such a role she considers constitutes an attempt to control adult reading, and failing in that it did not attract users to the library, in particular the working man. A modification of this role saw the provision of 'mediocre fiction ... as bait ... for the uncultured' while still leading in a progressively educational direction towards better reading (cf 2.3.1.9). In Garrison's opinion what public library users really desired to read were 'entertaining and popular books' (cf Garrison, 1979 : 213, 217-9).

In the early 1900s the public library began looking at alternative directions in which to channel the library's facilities. One of the most successful of these, which reached its peak in 1912, was the concept of the public library as a community centre. This encompassed many facets of library extension services (cf 2.2.4), and the sponsoring of a wide range of activities not directly connected with books. Both in rural and urban areas, library staff organised clubs, festivals, lectures and even correspondence courses to such an extent that in 1915 the A L A was prompted to warn that unbridled engagement in such activities held the

risk that they would usurp the traditionally acknowledged primary functions of the public libraries (Garrison, 1979 : 206-17)'.

However, this increased social involvement is seen as the public library seeking a more meaningful role. By the outbreak of World War I, the public library was to find an important role in the provision of books to the troupes (Garrison, 1979 : 213, 217-9).

Following the development of the first branch in 1875 of the Boston Public Library, Herbert Putnam, who became its director in 1905 (cf 2.3.1.8), established a library system which in some four years encompassed 15 branches and 56 delivery stations. This system's success encouraged many other cities to surround themselves with similar branches and delivery stations. It prospered mainly because of its flexibility and, in particular, its ability to adapt to local socio-economic and geographic conditions. Predeek considers that the effectiveness of the organisational aspects of such a system constituted not only one of the most important developments of the period, but one of the best systems in the world, with the possible exclusion of those in Britain. By this period the public library had developed a role related to the social and cultural life of its public, in the form of adult education (Predeek, 1947, 103, 108-11).

During the first decades of the twentieth century great fortunes were made in the United States and the country benefitted from the provision of art galleries, museums, schools and libraries as memorials to the achievements of wealthy philanthropists. Perhaps the greatest name

associated with of public library development is that of Andrew Carnegie who founded a corporation to carry out his philanthropic enterprises of which the public library was the most important (cf 2.2.3.2) (Predeek, 1947 : 103, 108-11).

#### 2.3.2.1 THE ROLE OF PHILANTHROPISTS IN THE FOUNDING OF AMERICAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The establishment of public libraries was not the result of any single factor, but rather of a complex variety of social conditions which evolved over a period of time. At the core was the ability of society to support such an institution and its resultant relationship to economic prosperity and social stability. It is not surprising, therefore - at a period when fortunes were being made in the United States - that rich men should consider founding libraries to help their lesser privileged fellows and society in general. However, the greatest weakness of such benevolence was perhaps that it was unsolicited and did not develop naturally, but to an extent was imposed upon the community. Thus, it became the practice of benefactors to demand a parallel contribution from such a community to ensure the library's welfare. To a certain extent such gifts realised their full potential only when the recipient society had achieved a degree of stability and prosperity, but their influence upon the development of the public library was immense (Shera 1949 : 200-6).

Such acts of philanthropy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included the donations of collections and funds to colleges and public libraries. Notable among such benefactors were John Jacob Astor



(cf 2.3.1.6), who founded the Astor Library in New York in 1854, James Logan, the Quaker humanist who bequeathed his personal library to the people of Philadelphia (Stone, 1977 : 133); James Smithson, who founded the Smithsonian Institute, a rival to the L C for the status of serving as the American national library (cf 2.3.1.8) (Johnson, 1966 : 176-76); Samuel Tilden to the Tilden Trust (cf 2.3.1.6); and Enoch Pratt, a millionaire whose bequest facilitated the establishment of the Free Library of Baltimore, which became known as the Enoch Pratt Free Library in 1882 (Kalisch, 1969 : 47-50).

Undeniably, however, the greatest benefactor of libraries was Andrew Carnegie (cf 2.2.3.2) who, among other philanthropies, donated 4 million dollars to the A L A to advance its goal of an envisaged universal library service. He was also directly responsible for the construction of more than 2 000 library buildings in the United States, Canada, Britain and other English-speaking countries, including South Africa (cf 2.4.3.1). The stimulus to the public library movement provided by such generosity and foresight over a period of many years was of such fundamental importance that Johnson considers it 'difficult to imagine how American library history would have developed without them' (Johnson, 1966 : 183; Carnegie U K Trust, 1927 : 11).

### 2.3.3 POST WORLD WAR I DEVELOPMENT AND THE DEPRESSION YEARS : The 1920s and 1930s

By the 1920s library development, slowed down by the First World War, had regained momentum and public library facilities were extended to smaller

towns, while investigation and experiments were carried out in the area of extension services (cf 2.3.2). In 1926 the Survey of Libraries in the United States, a study by the A L A of the country's libraries was published. This covered some 300 libraries and all aspects of their operation. Unfortunately the implementation of its recommendations was interrupted almost immediately by the depression years which began in 1929. During the depression library budgets were reduced severely and many branches were closed. However, these years also had a positive aspect: there was a marked increase in public library use, as was the case in Britain (cf 2.2.4), not only among the unemployed, but among all people who sought to improve their prospects of employment and promotion (Johnson, 1966 : 236-48).

Of future significance was the establishment of a postgraduate school of librarianship during this period. In 1926 the Carnegie Corporation of New York made available one million dollars for the establishment of such a school, of a standard equal to that of the Harvard Law School. The University of Chicago was approached to implement the proposal. The Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago was opened in October 1928, with a staff of four professors and a student complement of ten. By 1935 there were 36 students, and fifteen masters degrees had been awarded. The School laid emphasis on research in sociological fields, which included large surveys of users' reading interests and of user psychology (cf 4.1.4). However this type of research found little favour among the majority of American librarians, who tended to be more pragmatic in their professional commitment, and who questioned the applicability of

sociological research methods to a topic as elusive as the library users' psychological responses to reading (Munthe, 1939 : 145-49).

#### 2.3.4 THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND THE POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD : the 1940s and 1950s

Unlike the First World War, World War II did not interrupt public library development. Indeed, further growth of public libraries was actively encouraged by the Federal government to boost wartime morale (the United States did not enter the war until 1941, two years after Britain), and to offer more active, vigorous information services to business and industry.

After the War several factors influenced the rapid development of public library service. The return of war veterans increased the need for adult education which was aided by the government-sponsored Veterans' Administration. This program was launched in 1944 to help returning soldiers, particularly in regard to education and vocational training (World Almanac, 1974 : 503). The increased demand for adult education not only flooded colleges with students who hoped to complete their interrupted or delayed education, but rendered inadequate existing supporting facilities. The attempt to redress the dearth of appropriate institutional facilities resulted in large-scale new developments, which included the provision of new library buildings, branches and all types of service. Also, rather unexpectedly, encouragement to use public libraries was caused by the introduction of television services in the United States: this had the positive effect of exposing a wider audience to

talks and reviews of books, thereby generating a concomitant demand among the public for library access to the sources (Johnson, 1966 : 240-45).

Anticipating public library needs in the post-War period, the A L A took the significant step of determining public library standards and formulating its aims and objectives (cf 3.1.2) in a publication entitled A national plan for public library service. This work was planned in three stages and was to have considerable influence on public libraries in the United States and Britain. The report was completed under the Chairmanship of C B Joeckel, and stage one, Post-war standards for public libraries was published as early as 1943. These standards were based upon empirical data obtained from, and commented on by, experienced public librarians. They reflect a substantial consensus of opinion on the role of the public library, and this was formulated into five basic objectives, namely, education, information, aesthetic appreciation, research and recreation (cf 3.1.5) (A L A, 1943 : 20; Blasingame, 1953 : 370).

The two final stages of the report appeared in 1948. Stage two gave an inventory and evaluation of the state of American library service, while stage three provided the final plan prepared for the Committee on Post-War Planning. The aim of the report was to lay down minimum standards for library service for the whole country, and to promote the further development of strong library units by facilitating the coordination of library services rendered by local, state and federal governments. Public library objectives were defined as being twofold, viz the moulding of more enlightened citizens, and the personal enrichment of the life of the individual. The report further recommended that every public library

should have 'a clear sense of purpose, a sense of the reading process', and an understanding of the community it served, with each library forming a statement of its objectives to meet its own particular needs (Joeckel, Carleton & Winslow, 1948 : vii-viii, 151-60).

In addition, this national plan was based upon the conviction that any development of a library system depended on the determination of an optimum size for every service unit, which, the authors stated, should be large enough and have sufficient income to provide a service of adequate quality. Because of the considerable regional and social differences, the authors argued, it would not be practicable to impose a uniform pattern of service throughout the country. Consequently, a scale of size service modules was proposed. These modules were to be composed of (a) independent municipal libraries for cities with a population exceeding 25 000; (b) county libraries which were to serve the whole area of their legal and fiscal jurisdiction, together with county libraries which serviced parts of large counties; (c) regional or multi-county libraries, which served two or more counties; (d) cooperating or federated groups of libraries; (e) state library service whose role, it was suggested, could be to promote the services of the libraries under its jurisdiction throughout the state concerned. At the top of what was hoped would be a truly national library service, stood the L C in its capacity of national library (cf 2.3.1.8) (Leigh, 1950 : 2, 53-69, 245).

### 2.3.5 MODERN DEVELOPMENTS : The 1960s and 1970s

Again as experienced in Great Britain (cf 2.2.6), rapid developments in many fields gave rise to a considerable increase in publications, and the resultant publication explosion rendered impossible the processing, issuing and storage of books and journals by traditional methods. Research and development was directed towards solving such problems, and new mechanical processing methods were tried, including the substitution of printed material by microfilm, and the creation of cooperative inter-library centres together with deposit libraries (Johnson, 1966 : 252-53).

During the 1960s three distinct factors generated a new form of library cooperation, viz known as the multi-type, which involved academic, special, institutional and school libraries. The first factor was escalating costs and restricted budgets which forced consideration of the sharing of resources on libraries. Secondly, the development of new technology which could overcome the problems of distance and different methods and so aid cooperation. To this end the development of the MAchine Readable Cataloguing (MARC), which enabled catalogue data to be recorded on to magnetic tapes and then transmitted through telephone lines, not only greatly aided library cooperation but represented, as Casey suggests, 'an enormous intellectual breakthrough'. The third factor was the encouragement of public libraries to become part of the multitype networks for which funds were provided (Casey, 1978 : 65-75).

The introduction of computerisation in libraries required the building up of an entirely new framework of formats to facilitate the continuity of

its services (Goodrum, 1974 : 228-30), and by the 1970s new online computer systems allowed direct communication between the user and the computer information bank, by means of a typewriter keyboard and video screen or print-out. Networking systems were started in 1964, and their facilities include acquisition, circulation control, subject search and inter-library loan. As library co-operation increases, and as more data bases became available through such improved technology, the public library will be able to offer its public not only greater efficiency but a wide range of informational services (Lancaster, 1977 : 394-95, 401-2).

By the early 1970s new online computer systems allowed direct communication between the user and the computer information bank, by means of a typewriter keyboard and video screen or print-out. Networking systems which started at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M I T) in 1964, were developed and these were followed by the first full-scale system, the Remote Console System of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (N A S A). MEDical Literature Analysis and Retrieval Systems (M E D L A R S), which has become one of the largest networks in existence, was initiated in 1971. Future facilities include acquisition, circulation control, subject search and inter-library loan. As more data bases become available, the public library will be able to offer its public not only greater efficiency but a wide range of information services (Lancaster, 1977 : 394-95, 401-2).

## 2.4 DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN SOUTH AFRICA

### 2.4.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa, in many respects, shares a similar background to the United States, in terms of European colonial influences and settler origins. The first Europeans arrived at the then Cape of Good Hope in 1652, when a representative of the Dutch East Indian Company, Jan van Riebeeck, established a revictualling station to be maintained for the Company's ships bound for the East Indies. Permanent settlement began in 1657 with the granting of land to 'nine free burgers', who were required to sell their produce to both the garrison of the settlement and passing ships (Schirmer, 1980 : 130).

The history of the development of the public library in South Africa follows that of the country as a whole. Starting from what had become the Cape Colony after the second British occupation (the settlement at the Cape of Good Hope had been under Dutch control), European settlers emigrated northwards on the Great Treks of the 1830s and 1840s, opening up and also settling new land (S E S A, 1972, Vol 5 : 328-38). By the mid-nineteenth century these settlers and their descendants had formed four separately governed political units, viz the Cape Colony, the independent republic of the Orange Free State, the South African Republic, in the Transvaal, and the British Colony of Natal. Jointly, these four territories were to become the Union of South Africa within the British Empire by the Act of Union of 1910, and a Republic in May 1961 (Schirmer, 1980 : 176).



#### 2.4.1.1 EARLY LIBRARIES AND COLLECTIONS IN THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

The practical need of books by the officials of the Dutch East Indian Company in the course of their work characterised the early type of material brought to the Cape Colony. This included works on Roman Dutch law, and the laws of both Holland and the Dutch East Indies, as well as textbooks of notarial practice. Such books were brought by visitors and officials of the Dutch East India Company and were usually sold on departure for Holland. Early thoughts concerning the establishment of a library, in response to these practical needs were raised by Commissioner C J Simons in 1708, who made the recommendation that a legal library be set up. Not only was such a library established: it was to receive many bequests, including that of the Governor of the Cape, Ryk Tulbagh, in 1771. This early library was the forerunner of the modern government departmental libraries (Immelman, 1970a : xiii).

One of the earliest private book collections, which was to develop eventually into a public library, was that of Joachim von Dessin, who had become the Secretary of the Orphan Chamber in Cape Town in 1727. Between then and his death in 1761, he was able to form a collection of more than 4 000 volumes. These he bequeathed to the Dutch Reformed Church in Cape Town in the hope that they might be of use to the community and one day become the nucleus of a public library. After a period of neglect at the Kosterhuis, the church's consistory adjoining the Groote Kerk, von Dessin's original wish was fulfilled. In 1818 the South African Public Library was founded, and his collection was transferred to the new library two years later in 1820 (Robinson, 1968 : 1; Immelman, 1970a : xiii-xiv).

Collections of books covering a wide range of subjects were to come from many Dutch East India officials. So, too, did several collections from ministers of religions, notably those which had once belonged to the Rev H W Ballot of Graaff-Reinet. Private societies were introduced towards the end of the eighteenth century, which included the Society Concordia in 1797 (accessible to the public as a subscription library from 1802), also a year later the Society Harmony which was founded upon an even earlier society. However, the general scarcity of reading matter in the Cape led various military regiments garrisoned there to establish their own subscription libraries. These were followed in the early nineteenth century by the appearance of commercial rental libraries (Tyrrell-Glynn, 1972 : 29-43).

In the period 1803 to 1806 the Cape was governed by the Dutch Batavian Republic, and during this time a member of the Concordia Society at 1 Strand Street, Joachim Itzen, not only served as the club's librarian, but sought to plan a school similar to one in Holland, which included facilities for adult education and a library. Although the return of the British in 1806 prevented such plans from coming to fruition Itzen had run a circulating library from 7 Dorp Street in 1805. The latter was not very successful and experienced several changes of ownership and location. The Harmony Club (a men's social club in the Heerengracht) became a competitor with a similar type of library in 1810, having changed its name yet again, this time to the African Club (Immelman, 1970b : 35-36).

Another well-known circulating library was founded by James Howell, and appears to have been both a library and a stationery shop (cf 2.2.1.4).

This library was established in Longmarket Street in 1817, and although it suffered many financial problems remained in existence for several years (Tyrrell-Glynn, 1972 : 29-43). Immelman suggests that Howell was a clerk with the Naval Victualling Department, who had arrived in Cape Town in 1806, but dates his library from 1819 to 1826. At his library, known as the Good Hope Circulating Library, Howell lent books to residents at a charge of three Rix Dollars (i.e. 1 Rix dollar = 4 British shillings at the time) for three books per month (Immelman, 1970b : 36).

Further attempts at establishing circulating libraries met with moderate success. These include the libraries of local merchants, such as Lacable & Co., and the printers of the Cape Town Commercial Advertiser, re-established in 1828 by Bridekirk and Greig (Tyrrell-Glynn, 1972 : 28-36, 44). The first books and newspapers privately printed and published in the Cape appeared after the arrival of the 1820 settlers from Britain. The only newspaper available before this date was the official Government Gazette. The Commercial Advertiser, as the first independent newspaper, established by Greig with Thomas Pringle and the Rev. Abraham Faure, appeared in 1824, but was short-lived due to an argument over censorship with the Governor. It was re-established in 1828 by Greig and Bridekirk (S A in Print, 1952 : 157-59).

Following Bridekirk's unsuccessful attempt to establish a subscription library in 1824 and Greig's in 1828, a few more followed. In 1833 Jan van der Chrys started a 'Lees-Boekery', or circulating library, which catered for both town and country subscribers. Four circulating libraries were

established in Grahamstown, but, like those established earlier in the Cape Colony, it did not last long. One other library, which belonged to the Cape Town branch of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, (cf 2.2.1.2; 2.3.1.2) provided a free library service, its holdings comprising mostly tracts and other religious publications (Immelman, 1970b, 1970 : 37).

In the early nineteenth century the Cape appears to have had a relatively small reading public. The European population of Cape Town in 1806 is estimated at only about 5 000 people, most of whom were Dutch (Immelman, 1970b : 37).

#### 2.4.1.2 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY

As already noted, during the first one hundred years after the Dutch settlement in the Cape in 1652, no form of public library existed, and it was not until the von Dessin bequest in 1761 that the suggestion of establishing such an institution was even mooted. Thus the date is a significant landmark as a beginning in the development of the public library in South Africa (Taylor, 1967 : 15).

After the second British occupation of the Cape, by Proclamation of the 20th March 1818, Lord Charles Somerset (Governor at the time), the South African Public Library came into being in Cape Town. It was to be financed from a tax on the gauging of wine. The main credit for the idea of establishing a public library in the Cape however should be accorded to Col. Christopher Bird, the Colonial Secretary, and the Senior Colonial

Chaplain, the Rev. George Hough, later to serve on the library committee, rather than to Lord Charles Somerset. The idea for suggesting the major source of revenue for the library is believed to have come from a Mr John Collison, a wine merchant (Robinson, 1968 : 1-2).

Its actual establishment was instigated by leading merchants of Cape Town. The library was first housed in the Old Supreme Court. In 1828 it was moved to the Commercial Exchange building, where it remained until 1860. The von Dessin Collection was transferred to the South African Public Library in September 1820, but on a semi-permanent loan basis rather than as an outright donation by the Groote Kerk. By the 2nd January 1822 the Library was opened daily, free of charge to the local public, which encompassed all citizens over the age of sixteen, including army and navy officers, all civil servants and residents. In that year two honorary and two paid librarians were appointed. Following the resignation of one of the latter, Thomas Pringle, an 1820 settler, poet and philanthropist, was appointed. He too resigned two years later, following a dispute with the Governor concerning the freedom of the press (cf 2.4.1.1). His post was then filled by Alexander Johnstone Jardine, who held it until 1845 (Robinson, 1968 : 3).

In 1828, the wine tax benefit was removed by the authorities, leaving the library without a public source of revenue. The only possible solution to the financial impasse was taken at a public meeting, held on 31st March 1828, when it was decided that the Library should become a subscription and circulating library. Henceforth the use of the Library was free to the general public for access to reference material, but only paying

subscribers were permitted to remove books (Kritzinger, 1946 : 79-85; Robinson, 1968 : 2-5).

Much later - after several moves during the governorship of Sir George Grey - the site opposite Parliament in the Old Dutch East India Gardens was allocated to the Library in 1858. A new building was erected, and opened to the public in 1861. A year later the Governor presented a large part of his own valuable collection to the Library (Kritzinger, 1946 : 79-85; Robinson, 1968 : 2-5).

The South African Public Library was to receive copyright privileges in 1873 (Immelman, 1970 : xv) (cf 2.4.2), and after 1910 and the Act of Union (cf 2.4.1) it was accorded the status of one of the two national libraries, the State Library in Pretoria being its counterpart in the north. In 1967 it was to change its name to the South African Library (Kesting, 1980 : 170).

#### 2.4.1.3 SUBSCRIPTION LIBRARIES

One of the earliest subscription libraries in Cape Town was housed in a room in the Commercial Exchange, which had been built by merchants of the city in 1822 and later was to become the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce. The library contained a reading room and catered for users of the Exchange. Its stock comprised mainly commercial directories, statistical publications and foreign newspapers, but it also included a general lending library. In 1829 the bookstock and its function was taken over by

the South African Public Library with whom it shared the same building until 1860 (Immelman, 1972 : 21-22).

Small subscription libraries started appearing inland at Graaff-Reinet in 1822 (which was larger than that of Cape Town when the South African Public Library was established); in Glen Lynden in the Eastern Province in 1828 and in Swellendam in 1838. Many more followed: indeed the period from 1818 to 1874 may be considered a pioneering era in library development, and during those years 36 libraries were established in the Cape Colony and three in Natal. A few of these libraries successfully petitioned the government for aid, but most were financed by private subscription or public donation (Friis, 1962 : 70-73).

Such small libraries often owed their existence to enthusiastic collectors. For example, Thomas Pringle (cf 2.4.1.1) had helped to start the Glen Lynden Library; the Rev J S Ballot was a co-founder of George Library in 1840; and the Rev A Faure (cf 2.4.1.1) was instrumental in establishing a reading society with some of his own books in Swellendam in 1834. These became the nucleus of the Swellendam Public Library four years later (Immelman, 1970A : xvi).

Subscription libraries tended to develop two distinct features, viz special privileges which normally entitled subscribers to borrow books from the library; and access by all to a public reading room (housed in a room separate from the lending section), which qualified for grants-in-aid from the Colonial Government (Rooke, 1946 : 19). Such grants were received by several subscription libraries, usually subject to the public

being allowed free reading on the premises (Pitt, 1929 : 20-21). The South Africa Literary Society was established in 1824 to cater for a more intellectual readership. It was joined in 1829 by the South African Institution for the study of natural history in South Africa. These two societies amalgamated in 1832 and their bookstocks went to the South African Museum upon its foundation in 1855 (Immelman, 1970a : xvii). At the other end of the literary spectrum, in 1834 the Popular Library was founded for the young people of Cape Town. This library was established by a group of leading Cape Town citizens to provide opportunities for persons with a desire to read but who were unable to afford the annual South African Public Library subscription. The library was set up as an adjunct to it and was housed in a side room of the Commercial Exchange building (Friis, 1962 : 72). The Popular Library's reading matter was of a distinctly lower intellectual level than that of the parent library. Typical of its bookstock was the availability of fiction, religious tracts and magazines. Funds were donated by public-minded citizens (Immelman, 1972 : 23).

#### 2.4.1.4 RENTAL AND CIRCULATING LIBRARIES

The terms subscription, circulating and public libraries tend to be used interchangeably in the literature. Also, evidence of the existence of circulating libraries in the Cape appears to be sparse. It is claimed, however, that commercial rental libraries existed in Cape Town before 1803. These provided books in different European languages for the benefit of mercenary soldiers stationed there. Although the attempts made during the first half of the nineteenth century to establish circulating



libraries were often unsuccessful (cf 2.4.1.1) (Immelman, 1972 : 17-18), such libraries continued to exist, and when the diamond fields were opened up in the Northern Cape in the 1870s small rental or proprietary libraries were to be found operating in conjunction with the trading stores (cf 2.4.1.1), for the benefit of the miners. In Kimberley, the centre of diamond activity, a limited liability company was formed with a view to establishing a subscription library by subscription revenue and donation, while still conforming to Government requirements for a grant-in-aid (cf 2.4.1.3) (Kritzinger, 1948 : 97). Though the library eventually went bankrupt, it led to the founding of the Kimberley Public Library as a subscription library in 1882 (Immelman, 1972 : 27).

#### 2.4.1.5 MECHANICS' INSTITUTES

The Mechanics' Institute of Cape Town was founded in 1853 to provide a form of adult education through lectures and classes. The Institute was based upon the British model, as launched by Birkbeck in 1823 (cf 2.2.1.5) and was established by members of the public who saw an urgent need for better educational facilities for adults, and in particular for recent immigrants who possessed little education (cf 2.3.1.6). As in Britain, the Institute featured a small select library, which included works of history, travel, theology, fiction and poetry, as well as popular journals and newspapers.

The Cape Town Mechanics' Institute existed for about 25 years before it started to decline. This was due in the main to inadequate adaptation to local conditions, which among other matters, had a far less developed

industrial situation than that of nineteenth-century Britain. Similarly, as experienced in Britain (cf 2.2.1.5), the level of education among most students was too low to permit effective use of its facilities. Mechanics' Institutes were also established in Port Elizabeth and Durban. Their establishment can be seen as an important step in the direction of the ultimate establishment of the free public libraries, in so far as it was their aim to stimulate reading and, in a broader sense, to prepare the public for the idea of public libraries. In Port Elizabeth and Durban the Institutes were destined later to develop into public libraries.

Other libraries, or collections, which ultimately found their way into public libraries were the military libraries (cf 2.4.1.1) established for the garrison troupes throughout the nineteenth century, the last of whom were finally withdrawn after the Act of Union in 1910 (Immelman, 1970a : xviii; Immelman, 1956 : 17-27).

#### 2.4.2 THE GROWTH OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES : The late 19th and early 20th centuries

Following the establishment of the Popular Library in Cape Town in 1834 (cf 2.4.1.3) the next forty years saw a rapid growth of public libraries, and 39 of them had been established by 1874. Three of these were in Natal and the rest in the Cape. Bloemfontein Public Library in the Orange Free State was established in 1875, and the Johannesburg Public Library in 1889 after the opening of the goldfields in 1886 (Kritzinger, 1947b : 57-58; 1947a : 72; SAL, Vol 21(3) Jan 1954 : 79). Durban Public Library, based on a previous Mechanics' Institute (cf 2.4.1.5), was opened in 1879 (Friis, 1962 : 72).

In an attempt to gain fuller recognition for public libraries and to organise financial assistance for their support, the so-called Molteno Regulations, (ie the Memorandum of Regulations) were promulgated in the Cape Colony in 1874. In essence these gave a grant of a 'pound for pound' aid, between the limits of library subscription of twenty-five and one hundred pounds. So successful was this incentive that within ten years the 36 existing libraries in the Cape had increased to 53, and by 1894 to 89. The Molteno grants were not officially discontinued until the system was superseded by the Cape Provincial Public Library Ordinance No 44 of 1955 (Taylor, 1967 : 16; Friis, 1962 : 74-75; Kesting, 1980 : 170-71).

Under the Cape Colony Government Act of 1873 the South African Public Library became a copyright and national library for the Cape Colony (cf

Cape of Good Hope, 1873 : 322), and under the Copyright Act of 1916 it became one of the two state libraries together with the State Library of Pretoria, and was granted equal national copyright privileges (Immelman, 1970 : xv). The State Library had been inaugurated by President Kruger in 1887 and from the start the two national libraries were to work in close cooperation. To avoid costly duplication, the State Library undertook responsibility for the inter-library loan systems and bibliographic work, including the production of the Joint Catalogue of Monographs in South African Libraries, while the South African Public Library specialised inter alia in reference work and the preservation of important and precious material. Notable in this field was the retrospective cataloguing which included the updating of the Mendelssohn A South African Bibliography, a bibliography of Africana items up to 1925. The lending library function of the South African Public Library was only relinquished after 1954 with the establishment of Cape Town City Libraries (Kesting, 1980 : 176-78).

The Act of Union in 1910 laid down the constitutional foundations of the country as a whole, defining the areas of responsibility of the united provinces and the central government. In 1913 the Financial Relations Act effectively gave the administration of museums, art galleries and libraries, excluding the South African Public Library and the State Library in Pretoria, to each Province. The Act gave official recognition to public libraries, but its serious shortcomings were only rectified by the Act of 1948 when Provincial Administrations were given full powers to establish and manage public libraries (Taylor, 1967 : 17).

From the point of view of the direction in which the South African public library was developing, Dyer considers that by common consent at that time, the United States had started the public library movement, which subsequently spread to Britain and to the rest of the world, a view with which he disagrees, however, pointing out that the Cape Colony had established a Public Library in Cape Town as early as 1818. It must be acknowledged that libraries, maintained by public or private money had existed on the Continent for many centuries (Dyer, 1903 : 415). As an example the municipal library of Haarlem was founded in 1596 and that of Rotterdam in 1604. However, 'public library philosophy' did not really commence until 1890, in terms of their being maintained by the State and free and accessible to all members of the community (Maltha, 1976 : 206-1, 269). Referring to public library objectives, Dyer states that American public libraries were placing their emphasis upon recreational reading, a view not shared by Bostwick (cf 2.3.1.9), while Britain preferred an educational orientation. In his opinion South Africa followed the American trend of emphasising recreation reading in public libraries. Whilst exhibiting clear examples of influences exerted upon South Africa, this demonstrated that perceptions of public library objectives do not necessarily enjoy consensus among the three countries on such basic matters as user reading habits. However he avoids this important issue, suggesting that South Africa should make use of the best that both countries have to offer (1903 : 415-28).

During this period the provincial authorities in South Africa appeared to favour the British tradition of educational objectives for their libraries and in 1921 the Administrator of the Cape Province ruled that the grants-

in-aid to subscription libraries provided by the Molteno Regulations of 1874 (cf 2.4.2) could not be spent on works of fiction. He stated that 'It has been found that libraries have spent the Government grant almost wholly on fiction ... and have neglected the building up of a collection of representative work of a more solid nature ...' (quoted by Asher, 1942 : 112; Thomas, 1978 : 71). Murray further confirmed the public's preference for fiction reading for recreation, and commented with concern that subscription libraries 'were required to pander to indifferent public taste' and provide large amounts of what he termed 'indifferent literature'. Citing rigid stock-buying standards of American public libraries, he suggested that South African public libraries also had neither the function nor the need to waste time and money on 'ephemeral fiction' at that time (Murray, 1937 : 33).

#### 2.4.3 DEVELOPMENTS BETWEEN THE WARS : The rural library service

Following the Act of Union in 1910, public library development was slow, owing to the disorganisation and disruption in the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War, and to the immediately subsequent economic depression. 1914 marked the onset of the First World War, in which South Africa as part of the British Empire at the time, became involved. Thus it was not until the late 1920s that public library development was able to continue (Robinson, 1968 : 7).

In this period one of the most pressing demands for library services came from the rural areas. Here the serious problems came to the notice of several women's organisations, particularly agricultural and religious

groups, who were closely involved with rural activities (Thomas, 1978 : 84).

Many of these problems were generated by the changing patterns of agriculture which followed the disruptions of the Anglo-Boer War. Reconstruction saw the introduction of more scientific farming methods, for which many rural dwellers were insufficiently educated to adjust. Consequently they left the land and drifted to urban areas, where their lack of skills contributed to what was termed the 'Poor White Problem'. Droughts, particularly those of the 1920s, in conjunction with the effects of the world depression of the late 1920s, rendered the situation critical (S E S A, 1976 (1) 246-47; (8) 655-56; (3) 101).

Aspects of such problems were seen to stem from a general lack of awareness, and insufficient facilities for adult education. Books and libraries, in the form of free rural services, were believed capable of contributing to the possible solution (Heslop, 1946 : 73-74). A small event at the Germiston Public Library in 1929 prompted the provision of such a service. A letter was received from a country subscriber, stating that, like thousands of others, he could no longer afford the subscription because of crop failures. The letter was passed to the Administrator of the Transvaal, who set up a committee to investigate the situation, and this led to the provision of four thousand pounds towards the launching of a rural library service.

The Transvaal Farmers' Free Library was set up in 1930 with some 13 centres, and, although relatively primitive compared to other library

services in South Africa, was deemed a success. In 1935 it became the Transvaal Rural Free Library (Stirling, 1941a : 77). Such success was surprising in view of the fact that effects of the depression had eroded recommended funding to virtually nothing (Borland, 1941 : 1).

#### 2.4.3.1 THE INFLUENCE OF THE CARNEGIE CORPORATION : The Memorandum of 1929

In 1927 Dr R P Kepple and James Bertram, President and Secretary respectively of the Carnegie Corporation of New York (cf 2.2.3.2; 2.3.2.1), visited South Africa and were distressed by the poor conditions of most public libraries. On their recommendation, a year later a survey was undertaken by two internationally-recognised librarians, viz Milton Ferguson, State Librarian of California, and S A Pitt, the City Librarian of Glasgow, Scotland (Friis, 1962 : 79).

The results of this survey were published in 1929. It reported that South African public library development was at an early stage; its growth was inhibited by a sparse white population on the one hand and a relatively large non-white population on the other; the lack of a central government before 1910. Limited transport and communication facilities over large areas contributed further obstacles. Of the 211 public libraries surveyed for the Carnegie mission, most were maintained by subscription of the time, although some were receiving government or municipal grants-in-aid, usually subject to the public being allowed free reading on the premises (cf 2.4.1.4). Recommendations cited the need for a blueprint for the



development of a national library system which would be based upon a scheme drawn up by a proposed National Library Board (Pitt, 1929 : 20-21).

Their report, presented in the form of a Memorandum, made seven main recommendations. These dealt with free libraries to all the various communities of the country (particularly the non-white groups), with the professional development of school libraries, the proper organisation of university libraries, the need for a professional library association and formal training for librarians. Finally the report recommended that a national library board should be established (Kesting, 1980 : 712).

During the period 1908-1923 grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York totalled twenty-eight thousand pounds which provided for the building of libraries in twelve towns in the Union (Taylor, 1967 : 18).

#### 2.4.3.2 THE BLOEMFONTEIN CONFERENCE OF 1928

Following abortive attempt in 1904, to reconsider the establishment of a professional library association, together with the presentation of the survey of the Carnegie Corporation of New York (cf 2.4.3.1) the first national conference of librarians was convened in Bloemfontein from 14 to 16 November, 1928 (Taylor, 1967 : 71).

The Bloemfontein meeting considered the results of the Pitt and Ferguson survey, in the Memorandum. The survey found inter alia that there were no legal or financial foundations upon which to establish a national library service, nor was there any form of central body to undertake the

organisation of such a service (Results of the S A Library Survey, 1929 : 712-13).

Discussion on the desirability of founding a representative professional library association led to the suggestion that the primary aims of an envisaged organisation should relate to the development of library facilities throughout the country and the encouragement of the training of library staff. At the meeting a committee was appointed to organise the creation of such an association (Taylor, 1967 : 71).

To assist in the realisation of the recommendations made in the Memorandum, the Carnegie Corporation of New York provided grants amounting to almost R150 000 (ie seventy-five thousand pounds) at the time (Kesting, 1980 : 172).

#### 2.4.3.3 THE SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Following the Bloemfontein Conference of 1929 (cf 2.4.3.2) and the work of the committee appointed to organise the creation of a professional library association, the South African Library Association (S A L A) was officially inaugurated in July 1930 with an initial membership of 89. Aid was given by the Carnegie Corporation of New York in the form of grants-in-aid for the establishment of the association and the launching of a quarterly journal. The first issue of the journal, South African Libraries, which was the product of the stated intentions, was first published in July 1933 (Taylor, 1967 : 71-77).

The Constitution of the new library association contained eight objectives, the first of which declared its primary aim as being 'To unite all persons engaged or interested in library work by holding conferences and meetings for the discussion of all matter affecting libraries'. The other objectives covered such areas as administration, the establishment of new libraries, the training of librarians and the promotion of cooperation between libraries, the public and the Government (Friis, 1962 : 85).

#### 2.4.3.4 THE INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE REPORT OF 1937

Following the recommendations of the Carnegie Corporation of New York's Memorandum (cf 2.4.3.2), in 1936 the Minister of the Interior appointed a committee to enquire into the state of libraries in South Africa on behalf of the Government. The committee's report reiterated the main points of the Memorandum and suggested that the two main problems were the deficiencies of the existing rural library system and the total lack of branch libraries in urban areas. The first priority was identified as the need for the development and support of the two national libraries (viz the State Library in Pretoria and the South African Public Library in Cape Town) to enable them to participate in the construction of such systems. It was also proposed that the State Library act as a coordinating body, while each Province was to develop a separate public library service, with regional centres, which would serve their own areas and adjacent rural centres. It was further recommended that the responsibility for urban public libraries should be under the control of municipal authorities who

would receive grants from the provincial administration (Report of the Interdepartmental Committee, 1937 : 10-25).

In their recommendations the committee placed much of the blame for the poor state of the county's libraries on the subscription system, which only few could afford and therefore did not attract much Government concern in terms of development. They suggested a speedy change of the status to that of free, rate-assisted libraries in order to develop a much needed rural service (Report of the Interdepartmental Committee, 1937 : 10; Kesting, 1980 : 172).

#### 2.4.4 THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL LIBRARY SERVICES : the 1940s and 1950s

Although the Interdepartment Committee's Report was well received, the intervention of World War II eventually slowed the implementation of any recommendations, and the only public library service to rural areas was one operating from the Germiston Public Library. After deliberations by Parliament and by the Provincial Administrations, Library Advisory Committees were established in the Transvaal in 1940 and in the Cape in 1941. Following a survey carried out by the committees, their final plans, which were eventually adopted by all four provinces, divided each Province into a number of regions, each with its headquarters situated in a large town. The small town libraries were to be affiliated to the provincial service with the local authorities providing an approved building and the staff and maintenance funding. Such libraries were to be free and entry to the provincial service was conditional on the abolition of

subscriptions. By 1964 the Transvaal had 90 affiliated libraries and the Cape 215. The other two provinces were slower to establish provincial library services and only started in the early 1950s (Taylor, 1967 : 41, 44-46).

By the end of the 1960s most municipal centres maintained their own library services independently of the State or provincial administrations. Cape Town, basing a municipal library service on the South African Library's subscription library function (cf 2.4.2), was established in 1952 with Provincial and Government grants and the affiliation of several small subscription libraries in the municipal area. By 1967 all large cities in South Africa had established independent free rate-supported libraries services (Taylor, 1967 : 48-49).

#### 2.4.5 MODERN PUBLIC LIBRARY DEVELOPMENTS : The 1960s and 1970s

The establishment of provincial and municipal public library services relieved the State Library of some responsibilities, enabling it to concentrate on its more traditional functions. Thus in 1941 State Library was able to produce the Joint Catalogue of Monographs in South Africa, which formed the basis for the national interlibrary loan service. This was followed by the South African Union Catalogue in 1972, which was based upon the Standard International Book Number. It was computer-based and produced on microfiche (Kesting, 1980 : 179).

In 1961 a research programme on library development was undertaken by the S A L A. Its report, entitled Aspects of South African libraries, was

published in 1962. Conceived as a plan for future library development, the central issue concerned library cooperation. The Report recommended that a national bookstock should be established together with a South African Advisory Council to implement the scheme (Willemse, 1979 : 131). This was followed in November of the same year by proposals submitted by S A L A to the National Conference of Library Authorities in Pretoria. Public libraries were cited as being one of five types of library in the Republic, namely educational, university, special and national, but the point was clearly stated that while the 'entire community has access to public library services' the central concern of library cooperation was to make collections available - 'on a national basis in the interests of study and research'. This would appear to refer to the interests of science and technology rather than concern for public libraries (Programme for future development - Proposals, 1962 : 5-10).

This emphasis away from the interests of public library towards study and research, is also apparent in Programme for future library development in the Republic of South Africa, which was adopted by the National Conference of Library Authorities in November 1962. Although the traditional adult educational role of the public library is reiterated, the primary objectives state that every library should become part of the national scientific and educational programme, whereby material for study and research may be made available - to those who wish to use it (Programme for future library development in the R S A, 1963 : 7, 24-25).

The use of computers in libraries was inter alia the subject of a symposium organised at Potchefstroom University in 1969 by the South

African Library Association which considered the implications of computer technology for South African Libraries (Kingwill & Van Houten, 1976: 53-77). Subsequent developments saw the establishment of information networks including, in 1983, the launching of the South African Bibliographic and Information NETWORK (S A B I N E T) system. This system is of considerable benefit to public, academic and scientific libraries alike, facilitating not only greater efficiency of the interlibrary loan service, but promoting cooperation between libraries and the State Library in cataloguing and bibliographic work (Boshoff, 1980 : 58-67).

The future plans for South African libraries appear to leave little, if any, accommodation for public libraries. It seems that these, in competition with academic and scientific institutions and the needs of industry and commerce, can anticipate a further decline in the priorities of public finance. The problem appears to be one of relevance (cf 2.2.6) to the community, and if as stated by Hooper that the very source of power is money, together with the fact that the public library is only used by a small percentage of the ratepayers who provide its finance, then the principle of a free library service may be considered in fact to be detrimental to its future development (Hooper, 1981 : 2-4).

## 2.5 CONCLUSIONS

The strands of influence from which the public library developed were manifold and highly complex. To the original religious influence of the libraries of the early churches and monasteries was added education, and as universities were developed, library orientation turned from a

religious to a more secular direction. The spread of education to the ruling classes, related reading and books to progress of a predominantly secular nature. To keep abreast of progress more and more books were required and the educated classes founded societies of a literary or scientific nature which included libraries where new books could be obtained. The final strand emerged with the development of a new form of reading which was neither for knowledge nor purpose but solely for recreation which appealed largely to emotion as distinct from the intellect.

Libraries and public finance formed a very early association with the establishment of endowed libraries, where benefactors gave their collections and libraries to the civic authorities in the hope that in exchange for such books being made free to the citizens of the city, the bequeathed material would be cared for in perpetuity.

The libraries in existence immediately prior to the establishment of the public library provided not only evidence of public reading habits but reflected a sharp division of interests between reading for knowledge and reading for recreation. Such reading was both encouraged by and supported by the commercial circulating libraries which were established by enterprising shopkeepers for a perceived market.

Occupying a crucial position between the two were the Mechanics' Institutes, where the artisan came to improve his skills. However, problems arose though the Mechanics' lack of education attainment compounded with fatigue of long working hours, which made study doubly



difficult but often had the effect of making recreational reading appear more attractive. However, in publicising the public library as an institution for continuing adult informal education the founders and politicians alike, while relating them to social reform to obtain acceptance of the public library concept, ignored the fact that the original motives for such Institutes eventually failed.

Underlying all the arguments, particularly in Britain where the whole issue was debated in Parliament (for national pride was at stake in the face of superior libraries on the Continent) was the need for public access to books on a permanent and secure basis. Virtually all the libraries set up in the past, unattached to any large institution, had failed because of inadequate finance and administration.

Thus the motives for their establishment in Great Britain were based on largely unsubstantiated socio-economic arguments, which in turn provided the early public library with a strong tradition of wholesome, educational reading. However, the realities of public reading at that time tended to suggest an undesirable popularity of recreational reading, which was regarded as incompatible with the public library's mandate.

The following chapter seeks to discover the manner in which the public library, by the development of its objectives, attempted to come to terms with its two inherited, and main strands of reading influences.



### CHAPTER 3 : PUBLIC LIBRARY OBJECTIVES

#### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

As discussed in the previous chapter, the original objectives of the library were determined by many motives, but more especially by the needs of the founders, and the educated classes generally. Furthermore, in the experience of the early public libraries (especially those in Britain) it was found that public reading tastes varied from those of the purposeful reading public of the literary and scientific subscription libraries, to those of the commercial circulating libraries where emphasis was placed on reading solely for entertainment.

Until the 1870s there was no professional body or organisation to direct or guide the new public libraries, who had to make their own decisions upon the manner in which they wished to serve their own public. As such, this initial period is of considerable importance to the future public library development, for it was here that such a service was shaped and traditions formed. Thus it was the desire to unify public library service and to redress deficiencies, already apparent in this period, which governed the task of the new library associations of Britain and the United States in the years to come.

It can therefore be argued that it was through the development of official objectives adopted by these library associations that the direction of the

public library developed in the attempt to come to terms with the goals articulated by its founders and recast by the organised professions.

In the following section (cf 3.1.1.) the more important statements of objectives will be considered, together with discussion upon the relationship between such objectives and the manner in which they are employed by librarians in the professional function of book selection (cf 3.2.2).

### 3.1.1 PUBLIC LIBRARY ATTITUDES AND OBJECTIVES : The late nineteenth century

The objectives of the public library may be considered as relating to the overall purpose or role of that institution, in that they refer to the planning of goals, which seek to achieve such a purpose (Totterdell, 1978 : 13).

The public library founders, in their original concept of providing the means for working classes' self-improvement through education, set themselves an inordinately ambitious task, for they lacked both adequate knowledge of library users' real and potential needs and the means of achieving their high-sounding objectives, as offered in the form of evidence for the provision of public libraries by public funds (cf 2.2.2.1; 2.2.2.2). In the United States of the 1880s the second generation of American public librarians, which included Melvil Dewey (cf 2.3.1.7), concentrated upon library organisation, and, in doing so, effectively compounded the problem by failing to give adequate attention

to the setting of objectives. By the end of the century the desire to improve the general public's tastes for reading was a source of considerable concern, with emphasis being laid on the provision of books of merit, and the librarian seen in the role of arbiter of the determination of such merit (Harris, 1973 : 2511-12).

During this time the notion of involvement with the community had become a conscious awareness inasmuch as it was felt that the public library should represent the intellectual centre of the community. It was Dewey's opinion that, through the influence of good books, it was possible for the public library to shape the reading of the community (Harris & Sadt, 1981 : 111). Although the general orientation of public library objectives did not change, a change was discernible in the perception of the means of justifying such objectives. In this regard the public library considered it expedient to emphasise the library's educative role as an adjunct to the school system; through slogans such as 'the people's university' they developed the concept of continuing education for the individual (Garrison, 1979 : 90).

In Britain, too, the last quarter of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of a second generation of librarians who acknowledged the concomitant need for enhanced professional abilities and expertise. This realisation was instrumental to the formation in 1877 of the Library Association (cf 2.2.3.1) as it was to its precursor, the American Library Association (cf 2.3.1.7) which had been established in the previous year, and several decades later it was to be central to the founding of the South African Library Association in 1930 (cf 2.4.3.3).

Some measure of the attitudes towards the public library and its objectives which prevailed in the 1880s may be gathered from Lovell's Function and operation of the free library system, a paper he presented at the 6th annual meeting of the Library Association in 1883. In it he saw librarians as priests in the 'Temple of Knowledge', their objectives being to disseminate the knowledge of the past and present and make it available to all library users. He also envisaged a close relationship with the education systems in Britain, with the school service as the institution where knowledge was acquired and the public library as the mine or storehouse of knowledge awaiting use (Lovell, 1886 : 58-59).

So important was this issue of public library objectives that the British Library Association held a symposium in 1889 to consider the problem of book provision, with special reference to the high proportion of fiction issues. It was decided, almost unanimously, that the public library should be a place not only of study, but also of diversion. The important fact, hitherto ignored, recognised that not all non-fiction was necessarily uplifting and, conversely, that fiction is not in itself trivial. However, attitudes towards reading saw learning and 'self-help' as a prerequisite to progress, and, as such, the desirable and proper business of the public library (Altick, 1973 : 44-51, 230-41).

Amid such prevailing professional attitudes, an important attempt to define public library objectives was made by MacAlister at the Second International Library Conference in 1897. He proposed that three things were demanded of libraries, namely (a) that they provide for the information needs of those who required it; (b) that they provide

wholesome literature which would also guide the young, and (c) in acknowledgement of the needs arising from twin poles of education and recreation, he suggested that for adults, books should be provided 'both to recreate and instruct' (MacAlister, 1898 : 10).

### 3.1.2 PUBLIC LIBRARY OBJECTIVES : The twentieth century

Martin suggests that the first formal standards for public libraries in the United States were those published by the American Library Association in 1933 (Martin, 1972 : 164). The A L A saw the public library as a product of a democratic society which had the role of providing for all its citizens the two central pillars of its objectives, viz self-education and recreation. The standards defined such objectives more precisely: amplifying the central aspects as embracing education and guidance; the diffusion of information and ideas for the benefit of the whole community; the improvement of cultural and spiritual values of life; and the provision of means for the constructive use of leisure (A L A bull. 27, 1933 : 513-14).

These aims constitute not only an amplification of the original objectives, but, in their inclusion of cultural values, community awareness was reinforced. A major programme of investigation into American education followed in 1936, in which it was concluded that the public library was an integral part of the country's education system. The early, primitive idea of using the public library as an instrument in making law-abiding citizens was modified to one of encouraging a higher

intellectual awareness of the tenets of democracy (Joeckel, 1938 : iii - 2).

In 1938 the A L A presented the first of three reports in a series entitled A national plan for libraries, which slightly expanded the objectives of the 1933 statement, without essentially altering them. The purpose of the public library was then generally viewed as a means of serving as an agency for education, culture, scholarship and recreation (A L A, 1938 : 4-6).

In the later report, published in 1943, the A L A showed their awareness of past motives which had influenced development, by acknowledging the public library's attempts to be 'all things to all men'. However, the report highlighted the relationship of library and State by clearly identifying the progression of a democratic society with the vitality, cultural level and enlightened attitudes of its citizens. The need for continuous education to meet the challenges of modern life was restated, and commitments of the public library in this respect were emphasised. The objectives are discussed in depth, but are basically seen as the logical consequence of two basic human rights, viz the right to work and the right to rest. From these aspects five fundamental objectives were codified. These included the promotion of education, information, aesthetic appreciation, research, and recreation. The advancement of knowledge and a sharpening of the capacity for cultural appreciation and creativity are cited in specific terms. Recreation is more fully defined in this statement, namely the process of making good use of leisure time in the interests of happiness and social well-being (A L A, 1943 : 20-21).



Education is expanded to include vocational training and an awakening of the awareness of the tenets of acquiring new knowledge and keeping abreast of new developments. Special emphasis is placed on the needs of the 15-20 age group as a means of aiding adjustment to adult life (A L A, 1943 : 5-8).

The final stage of the Post-War Planning Committee's report programme was presented in 1948. Here a shift of emphasis is discernible: the orientation has swung towards the community rather than education, and the overall objectives are seen, in essence, in terms of the promotion of enlightened citizenship and the enrichment of personal life (Joeckel & Winslow, 1948 : 4).

In the same year the British Library Association published the results of a pre-War survey of 1936-1937, dealing with the matter of objectives of the public library. It also identified the first priority as seeking to direct their service towards the overall benefit to society and State by the general development of the nation's level of civilisation. But to this end a new concept was raised, i e that of widening and enriching the experience of the individual through the reading of books, which at the same time shows a trend towards a consideration of reading by the individual rather than by the whole social group. Leisure reading is perceived as contributing to man's happiness, irrespective of any intellectual or educational gain. This view shows a marked shift away from the older, traditional attitude of reading for upliftment. Past influences remain in other objectives, which relate to the acquisition of

good English; of knowledge relating to public affairs and the use of educational and vocational facilities for study. The concern for services to rural areas was in response to a lack of general awareness by the rural public, together with their ignorance of the manner in which to conduct their own affairs (McColvin, 1942 : 17).

In South Africa developments saw the appointment, in 1959, of a committee by the South African Library Association, to draw up standards for use in public library administration for decision-making and the general evaluation of service. Their statement is considered as being 'probably one of the finest and most specific statements on standards for libraries.....' (Hirsch, 1975 : 44). Although praise from such an authoritative source as the Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science is highly complimentary, it must be admitted that such standards were already out-dated and failed to offer anything new.

The South African Library Association report of 1959 defined public library purpose as that of a social institution formed to meet evolving social needs. Public library objectives are widely stated and include aims and goals and cover some seven points. These are to : 1) Be freely available to all citizens; 2) To conserve material for the future; 3) To advance 'intellectual stature of the community'; 4) To advance the 'standards of the individual and community life'; 5) To widen 'aesthetic horizons'; 6) To promote the 'material development of the Union'; 7) To provide 'recreational facilities'. The standards also state that while there is no 'clear-cut division between the educational and the recreational value of a book', the purchase of the latter should not be at

the expense of the former. The public library, overall, is conceived of as a perpetual university for continuing adult education (SALA, 1959 : 1-6).

Though the public library standards of the American Library Association were revised in 1966 they showed little change in objectives. Education was seen as including support for formal studies as well as post-formal continuous self-education, but ways to reach more people, especially the poor, were considered and a new concept of 'outreach' programmes was suggested (ALA, 1967 : 9).

Similarly, a few years later the United Kingdom Public Library Research Group presented their own revised version of the American Library Association objectives of 1943. They redefine the public library as a 'multi-purpose information-culture agency', with the general objective of contributing to the quality of life and increasing man's happiness and awareness of himself and the world around him. The 1943 objectives are refined to four areas and summarised as follows:

1. Education - for individual and group self-awareness;
2. Information - for quick and accurate information, particularly on topics of current interest;
3. Culture - to promote culture and act as a cultural life centre;  
and
4. Leisure - to encourage the positive use of leisure for change and for relaxation (L A, 1971 : 233-34).

The UNESCO Manifesto of 1972 echoes the spirit of these objectives, calling the public library a democratic institution for education, culture and information. Education is reiterated as being a life-long process, information for new scientific advances as an adjunct to social progress and recreation is now defined as reading for the refreshment of the spirit 'by the provision of books for relaxation and pleasure' (UNESCO 1972 : 129).

Some five years later, in 1977, the American Library Association published a Mission statement for public libraries, superseding that of 1966. Although obviously based on the 1971 Library Association statement of objectives, it shows considerable new development and growth. Firstly, education is considered as a non-traditional process linking the individual to the whole record of man's experience. Secondly, the previous objectives of culture and recreation appear to have been merged into a single cultural objective, designed to foster the arts and creativity and also to encourage enjoyment of works of literature. Information now becomes the means of linking the individual to the resources of the community and others (ALA, 1979 : 4).

The British Public Libraries Research Group published a further study in 1979; this, while emphasising the importance of the Library Association's objectives of 1971, suggested that the time had come to develop a new set of objectives. Such objectives, they considered, should form a basis upon which libraries might construct their own. Their report repeats much material previously published concerning the benefits of the public library and the improvement of the quality of life, but rather than

clarify or redefine its objectives (as with the American Mission Statement of 1977) it seeks to expand the library's services. These include access to other resources and the protection of minority rights. Of particular interest concerning the objectives of the library is the statement that the public library will provide services that are relevant to 'the expressed and unexpressed needs of the community'. Such 'needs', however, are not defined more precisely (Brown, 1979 : 382).

In South Africa public library objectives remained under revision for several years with no further announcement being made until 1985, when the Public Libraries Division of SAILIS published Guidelines for the objectives and functions of the public library. These objectives did not fundamentally deviate from their predecessors. The key objective stated that 'The public library provides library materials and service to meet the identified information and leisure-time needs of its community.' Such objectives were to be achieved by a reference service, which would provide materials for information and research, together with an adult lending service which would meet the needs of information and leisure reading in the community served. Further aspects cited community referral services to provide information about activities and resources in the community, and establish the public library as a cultural centre SAILIS, 1985 : 1-7).

Public library objectives employed by the Cape Town City Library Service, tend to follow those as set out by the L A in 1971. An unpublished directive entitled Book Selection Policy of C.L.S. General Statement on Objectives, which set out the objectives of the service as being

Education, Information, Culture and Recreation, was issued to staff members (approximately 1974). Education is defined as providing for the informal educational needs of the community; Information as the provision of a referral service and a source of balanced knowledge and information; and Culture as the fostering of aesthetic appreciation and the provision of access to the cultural heritage of all people of all ages. In relation to the last objective, that of Recreation, the term is defined as the creative use of leisure time, 'and consequently the library materials provided by CTCLS for recreational purposes also relate to education, information and aesthetic appreciation' (CTCLS [1974] : 1-5).

### 3.2 BOOK SELECTION FOR RECREATIONAL READING

#### 3.2.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the previous section, the objectives of the public library appear to have been designed more to justify the purpose, and thus the existence, of the library, rather than to have been developed by the reality of the needs or desires of the library user. In an attempt to understand this continuing state of affairs, consideration will be given to the guidance provided by the literature on the function of book selection, the final process in which the collection development of the library is determined.

Such literature will be perused to establish whether or not there is evidence that past attitudes are being perpetuated and, if this is so,

whether or not it is acting as a factor militating against the full coverage of all sections of the fiction bookstock.

#### 3.2.1.1 BOOK SELECTION : The broad issues

A significant difference between the main purpose of academic, special or other institutional libraries on the one hand, and that of the public library on the other, is that the latter's task of providing books and other material to satisfy a vast range of user needs, makes the provision of a single definition of book selection impossible (Fiske, 1960 : 7-8). The priorities of book selection may be said to rest upon the triangular base of Dewey's dictum: that the aim of book selection is to provide the best possible reading, for the greatest number of people, at the lowest possible cost (Haines, 1935 : 21).

Thus the central areas of concern may be seen to be the selection of the best books, the definition of the reading public and the limits of finance. Other factors which must also be considered include the influence of pressure generated by the public, those generated from within the library, the importance of the national priorities and the prevailing attitudes and 'temper' of the time (Fiske, 1960 : 2). Such a notion is further defined by Paulin, who sees the 'ethos' of the era as relating to general trends and attitudes of mind of the general public (Paulin, 1978 : 511).

Taking these aspects and factors into consideration, the primary function of building bookstocks presents book selectors with a formidable and

responsible task. Types of bookstock may be said to start with notions of the 'ideal' or 'perfect' bookstock. Such an idea is criticised by McClellan not only as being impossible to achieve but as being impracticable. If a library's bookstock is to be 'dynamic', i.e. a living and growing entity, it must reflect the continuous changes of the society it serves (McClellan, 1980 : 236). Likewise the idea of a 'perfectly balanced' bookstock is undesirable, because it denies the possibility of constant growth. Therefore, the best that possibly can be achieved is perhaps Broadus' concept of an 'optimum' collection (Broadus, 1973 : 24).

This view was shared by Dewey, who more than a century ago suggested that the best that could be hoped for was a 'good working collection'. To this end he considers the usage of an individual book as the ultimate criterion in book selection. But, whatever the attitudes or pressures of the time, the most fundamental influence upon the function of book selection is that of the availability of finance. Upon this single aspect revolves the practical question of what type of books should be purchased. However, without proper finance book selection cannot begin to function (Dewey, 1876 : 391-93).

As the public library as a whole is an integral part of the community it serves, book selection not only reflects the objectives of the library, but must be aware of the fact that the response of the user is the central aspect upon which a public library service exists (McColvin, 1925 : 16-17).



### 3.2.2 BOOK SELECTION : General principles

Considering the difficulties and complexities involved in the task of the selection of public library bookstock, the lack of what McColvin describes as any real science on the subject dictates that decision-making must rest upon basic common sense and experience, but at the same time this lack renders the accuracy of such an undertaking somewhat precarious. However, the most obvious approach involves the fundamental position of the objectives of the library, which should relate to the demands made upon its facilities. This necessitates two main processes, viz those of discovering the demands of users by volume, and of assessing these demands by value (McColvin, 1925 : 14-17).

Haines in turn equates these processes with the classical division of supply and demand, the latter encompassing value, volume, and variety. Value is seen as being related to purpose, which in Haines' opinion, constitutes the two crucial principles of book selection, namely 'the development and enrichment of life' (cf 3.2.2). The 'knowledge of such books', Haines considers, requires not only a 'good literary background' but an understanding of the position and value in history of what is termed 'foundation books', for example 'Gibbon and Matthew Arnold', together with an alertness to recognise more contemporary works (Haines, 1935 : 41-2; 1950 : 39,49)

Traditional principles underlying book selection decisions may perhaps be summarised concisely as the selection of the right books (a) for the library's current users; (b) for the library's potential users (c) for the needs of the library's community, in terms of the varied cultural,

social, vocational and religious elements and minority interests; (d) for building the bookstock according to a definite plan, by seeking to acquire the best possible materials and to maintain a high standard of quality; and (e) for relating such bookstock selection to two basic standards, as mentioned above, those of library objectives and user demands so creating the judicious balance of quality or value, and demand (Carter & Bonk, 1959 : 12-18).

Fundamental qualities sought in the reviewing of books include such features and considerations as good literary form; authoritative treatment; judicious comparison with similar works; comprehensiveness, and impartial judgement. However, in terms of practicality, importance should be accorded to overall planning, which involves bookstock development and effectiveness in making the maximum use of the available finance (Haines, 1950 : 49-53, 107-8).

### 3.2.3 VALUE VERSUS DEMAND

It may be seen that one of the most central and also most exacting aspects of book selection is that of balancing book value with that of user demand. This inherent tension is particularly difficult to resolve, because it frequently includes opposing arguments, viz whether to provide what the librarian considers to be suitable for his public in terms of the library's objectives, or whether to be guided by the demands of the public. If 'demand' is seen as being integral to the service of the library, 'value' on the other hand is seen as determining the attitudes of the library towards such demands. When 'value' is related strictly to the

demands of users, the librarian will buy in terms of Dewey's triangular base with the "best" he can for his users (Broadus, 1973 : 14).

In attempting to find the means of defining such a complex concept as that of value in relation to public library bookstock, Haines views value in terms of literary merit. She suggests that books fall into three categories, viz (a) those for inspiration; (b) those for information; and (c) those for recreation. Books for inspirational purposes are seen to provide such aspects as wisdom and spiritual illumination. Information, by comparison, requires critical assessment as to authority rather than creative content, and finally recreation which is considered to contain 'great creative literature'. Here recreation is blended with inspiration to provide pleasure in the understanding of life, together with works termed as 'lesser creative imagination', but which are still capable of arousing the 'fine emotion' of understanding and sympathy in the reader. However, such divisions tend to merge - their value or merit is determined by 'the sincerity of their message, by truth and authority, by the excellence of expression or style', and, most importantly, by the honest portrayal, interpretation and insights into all aspects of human life (Haines, 1935 : 43-5; 1950 : 49-53).

Thus works of literary merit are viewed as levels of literary 'values and complexities, which of necessity form a hierarchy. Such structure, in Carter and Bonk's opinion, comprises three levels, namely, great literature, good literature and popular literature (cf 4.2.3). The distinction between a good novel and a great one relates to differences in style, structure and depth of characterization. Added to these criteria

is the very important aspect of durability, ie a long period of reader popularity. In the case of the good novel, its ability to arouse interest in the discerning reader is seen as proof of its merit (Carter & Bonk, 1959 : 104-5).

In a final assessment of quality in books Haines echoes the sentiments of both McColvin and Broadus that the two greatest requirements of any novel are seen as truth and art. Through truth, the portrayal of genuine human relationships; by art, the skills of style and structure of the writing (Haines, 1935 : 423).

Popular literature, to which Mann gives a lower rating than literary fiction, is less conducive to assessment by literary values, and in his view should in fairness be judged also in terms of its social function, so that its evaluation may occur from the viewpoint of both social and literary criteria (Mann, 1971 : 159-61).

If Haines considers truth and art and the provision of insights as being the desirable characteristics of literary fiction, then popular fiction, and light fiction especially, must be considered as providing a form of antithesis. However, McColvin does suggest that works which lack realism are capable of stimulating the imagination and thereby encourage its development (McColvin, 1925 : 32). Nearly half a century later Broadus is to suggest a similar notion: he relates it in terms of the great need for new ideas and development in a highly technical age. Broadus suggests the mind could be extended by providing unreal and unpredictable events,

especially those which do not conform to scientific thinking (Broadus, 1973 : 302-3).

Popular fiction also suffers from the influence of many attitudes in respect of the issue of supply and demand or quality versus quantity (cf 2.2.3; 2.3.1.9), which, in turn, are respectively related to the social functions of education and entertainment (Fiske, 1960 : 8); to mass culture compared to high culture (Stevenson, 1977 : 186); and to the extremes of good and evil (Drury, 1928 : 158). In terms of professional abilities, the assessment of quality or value upon a book is integral to the role of the librarian. A particular point is illustrated by Bonny, who suggests that 'good books' are to the librarian what 'good tools' are to a craftsman (Bonny, 1939 : 1-2).

However, it should be pointed out that in realistic terms there is a distinct relationship between the volume of demand and the subsequent value placed upon it, viz works of enduring literary merit and the bestseller. But when related to works of a 'less desirable' nature, i.e. light fiction, it not only focuses on the difficulties in the relationship between value and volume of demand, but becomes one of the central issues of the fiction problem, which is in itself part of the wider question of book provision and public library objectives (McColvin, 1925 : 26, 29-33).

From the many works consulted it would appear that the influence of the original library objectives, namely the promotion of information and education, are all-pervading. As mentioned, little, if any, references could be found which relate to criteria for the evaluation of fiction in

the context of public library book selection. In the following titles, which include recognised standard works on the subject of library book selection, mention of criteria for the selection of fiction was found to range from a paragraph, or perhaps one chapter at most, to nothing at all. Broadus is one of the few who views light fiction in a positive manner, but then only as 'general fiction' in the penultimate chapter of a 26-chapter work. Otherwise the subject tends to be discussed from the negative position of what it is presumed to lack in terms of literary merit, as is evident from the following writings :

- |                         |  |  |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| BLANCHARD, P            | <u>The right to read</u>   | Boston: Beacon Press, 1955                         |
| BONN, G S               | Evaluation of the collection                                     | In <u>Library Trends</u><br>January 1974 p 265-304 |
| BONNY, H V              | <u>A manual of practical book selection for public libraries</u> | London: Grafton, 1939                              |
| BROADUS, R N            | <u>Selecting materials for libraries</u>                         | New York: H W Wilson, 1973                         |
| CARTER, M D & BONK, W J | <u>Building library collections</u>                              | New York: Scarecrow Press, 1959                    |
| DRURY, F K W            | <u>Book selection</u>  | Chicago: A L A, 1930                               |
| FISKE, M                | <u>Book selection and censorship</u>                             | Berkeley: University of California Press, 1935     |
| HAINES, H               | <u>Living with books</u>   | New York: Columbia University Press, 1935, 1950    |
| KUJOTH, J (ed)          | <u>Libraries, readers and book selection</u>                     | New Jersey: Scarecrow, 1969                        |
| MCCOLVIN, L R           | <u>The theory of book selection</u>                              | London: Grafton House, 1925                        |
| MOON, E (ed)            | <u>Book selection and censorship in the 60s</u>                  | New York: Bowker, 1969                             |
| RANGANATHAN, S R        | <u>Library book selection</u>                                    | Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963 (1952)         |
| SPILLER, D              | <u>Book selection</u>  | London: Bingley, 1971                              |
| WELLARD, J H            | <u>Book selection</u>  | London: Grafton, 1937                              |

### 3.3 CONCLUSIONS

The original public library objectives as formulated by the founders, certainly as seen in Britain and the United States, related strongly to the needs of the founders and their educated class. These were interpreted as the need for books to help the reading public keep abreast of developments of both a scientific and cultural nature, and, for the less educated, the provision of books to aid their self-education in their leisure time.

The first discernible development of such objectives was the expansion of the library associations to include reading for recreation. The objectives as proposed at the second International Conference in 1897 (cf 3.1.1) laid the foundations not only for the later American Library Association objectives of 1933 (cf 3.1.2) but for the more modern ones of 1943 and 1977 (cf 3.1.2). Here the twin-poles of education and recreation are acknowledged, but education subsumes the provision of information and literature with guidance for the young reader. The recreational objectives are defined as providing materials for instruction and to encourage creative activities in their leisure time.

Recreation is variously developed to making the maximum opportunities of leisure time, to increasing the measure of man's happiness, and to expanding his awareness of the world around him, with a view to becoming linked eventually to a cultural objective in terms of which the public library is viewed as a cultural agency. The Unesco definition (1972) (cf 3.1.2), which sees recreation as the 'refreshment of the spirit', offers

possibly the greatest potential understanding of the complex factors involved in user reading wants, suggesting not only respite and relaxation from daily work, but also from the individual's overall problems and concerns (cf 4.2.3).

Overall, it is the focus which is seen to have changed, ie the original motive of self-education for the uneducated masses has become one of concern for the happiness and stability of the individual - a shift suggestive of the acknowledgement of an improvement in the level of general education. But, once again, the underlying motive suggests such attributes as being ultimately for the benefit of the State, rather than for the individual as an end in itself.

By 1933 the educational objective is firmly divided into component parts which are seen as self-education, information and the improvement of cultural values. These, by 1943, now become education, information, aesthetic appreciation, research and recreation, and are refined in 1977 to four, namely information, education, culture and leisure (cf 3.1.2). It should be noted that recreation (which is now termed a 'leisure' objective) is not only by implication ranked fourth among the acknowledged purposeful reading objectives; it constitutes merely a part of leisure reading which also embraces the non-literary categories.

From the above investigation into the relationship between public library objectives and the function of book selection, it may be seen that such a relationship involves the particular question of quality versus quantity. Translated into practicalities by Altick (cf 2.2.3), the issue becomes one



of decision-making as to the extent to which public libraries should buy what they consider suitable for their public in the light of their objectives, and whether they should accede to the demands of the rate-paying public, who may wish to read material that does not coincide with such objectives.

In over a century the professional library associations appear to have acknowledged the fact that many of the general public wish to read books of a 'non-purposeful' nature, but still remain reluctant to accept the full consequences of this stance. This attitude, it is felt, stems from one single source, namely that, whilst books which provide a greater understanding of the world may be seen to be instrumental in fulfilling public library objectives, there appears to be little if any understanding of the motives and satisfactions which make non-literary fiction popular. Such motives and satisfactions, however, are manifest in the popularity that characterises the best-seller and other categories of 'light fiction'.

Thus it is apparent that although there has been some broadening of attitudes to leisure reading, generally the original attitudes which stressed education and purpose have tended to persist. Hence no real advances towards an understanding of leisure reading have been made.

In the light of the foregoing, the next chapter will attempt not only to establish a profile of the readers of non-literary fiction, but also to consider what satisfactions are available to them through such reading.



## CHAPTER 4 : THE PUBLIC LIBRARY USER AND LEISURE READING SATISFACTIONS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

As a means of completing the examination of the establishment of the public library and the development of its objectives, this chapter will consider leisure reading in the fuller perspective of the public library user and his choice of public library leisure reading material.

This will be accomplished by means of an examination of the research studies undertaken into public library users and their reading habits, reflecting the development in user studies together with an indication of the limitations encountered.

For this purpose, the first half of this chapter will be directed towards the establishment of those factors which are influential to the development of adult reading habits, considering only those factors which are significant in the understanding of adult reading. Secondly, from this foundation it is hoped to isolate those user characteristics which determine public library use. Finally the second half of this chapter will be devoted to an investigation into the reasons or motives which underlie reading choices and the nature of satisfactions that may be achieved from recreational or leisure reading. Influential factors will initially be considered in relation to the development of user studies, and then discussed in greater detail where relevant to this study.

It is hoped the discussion of the characteristics of public library users will provide the basis for the development of a user survey questionnaire to be used in the empirical testing (cf 1.2.). However, in-depth testing of any of the influential factors established, is likely extend to beyond the scope of this study.

In similar fashion, from the information assembled in this literature survey it is further proposed to construct a typology of fiction categories, for the purpose of empirical testing, and finally to synthesize all information gathered in the literature survey, culminating in a research proposition, which will form the concluding section of this chapter.

Because of confusion arising from the multiplicity of terms employed to describe the novel which is not considered to be of literary standing, the term sub-classical fiction will be employed in the remainder of the thesis as a collective definition for all the genres of popular and lighter fiction.

#### 4.1.1 EARLY RESEARCHES INTO READING: The beginning of user studies

In ancient times, when oral traditions prevailed, works, such as Homeric legends and ancient Greek plays, were normally recited to knowledgeable audiences. The reading of literary texts was to develop gradually as a silent form of comprehension by the reader, which 'mirrored' his thinking processes (Huey, 1916 : vii). The first reading studies only appeared in the middle of the last century and generally constituted investigations

into the physiological aspects of reading, such as the movement of the eye, the length of attention given in relation to the speed of reading and its comprehension (Asheim, 1953 : 454). The second stage of research involved the 'hygiene' of reading, which considered the more mechanical reading requirements. These included the colour of the paper and the spacing of the letter and line upon the page (Huey, 1916 : Ch III & IV; Asheim, 1953 : 454).

Emphasis on the more sociological aspects of reading gave consideration to the reader in relation to his community, and were started at the Leipzig Public Library in 1908. Walter Hofmann, the librarian, became increasingly dissatisfied with methods of book selection, which inclined more to the tastes and interest of librarians and literary academics, than to those of the library's public. In an attempt to establish the needs and interests of the public, he analysed the issues, made personal contact with users, and employed surveys. From these investigations he suggested that those involved with the selection of books for public libraries should seriously take into consideration the needs and interests of the individual user. Hofmann studied in depth the needs of the various groups which comprised the library's public, giving special attention to the reading needs of women (Hofmann, 1931 : 210). (See also Waples & Taylor, 1931 : 38-40; and Murray, 1939 : 25-28)

But it was not until the 1930s that more scientific studies of reading were undertaken. These considered the role and purpose of reading in a social context and were aimed at acquiring information on the broad issues concerning readers and their reading (Berelson, 1949 : 134).

One of the first of many such studies was published in 1930 and came from the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago (cf 2.3.3). The study was presented under the auspices of the A L A and the Adult Education Department and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. It was national in scope and drew upon some 300 of the 800 surveys conducted throughout the country since the beginning of the century. It sought, primarily, to ascertain those factors responsible for the acquisition and continuation of good reading habits (Gray & Monroe, 1930 : vi, 4). A similar national study by Berelson, Dean of the Chicago Graduate Library School, continued the work done by Gray and Monroe, and was published in 1949. It collected and analysed studies done in the intervening years, and was published in the Report of the Public Library Inquiry (cf Berelson, 1949 : pref.).

4.1.2 RESEARCHES INTO PUBLIC LIBRARY READING: The characteristics of readers and influential factors in the development of reading habits.

In Gray and Monroe's attempt to establish those factors influential to the development of adult reading, the influence of differing variables was considered. These included the amount of reading done - by age, sex, marital condition, place of residence, occupation, educational advantages, attendance at movies and membership of organisations. From this data Gray and Monroe found that the amount read 'seems to be most closely related...' to three main factors. These are identified as 1. Educational advantages attained by the reader. 2. The manner of work they are engaged in, and 3. Their place of residence. The importance of age, membership of clubs and attendance at movies was found to be of less relevance (Gray & Monroe, 1930 : 28-38).

In their investigation into the kind of reading done, they considered a wide range of aspects which included the reading of newspapers and magazines, the type of books preferred and owned together with the interests and motives that influence reading. Their conclusions show that more time is devoted to the reading of newspapers and magazines than books. In terms of book reading they found a definite preference for recreational reading, with 'fiction as the most popular type of book read'. According to a survey for the Chicago Public Library, fiction accounted for over half of the books issued (cf 4.1.2.4). Motives for recreational reading were found to be diverse, ranging from the stimulation of the mind to the provision of pleasure (Gray & Monroe, 1930 : 38-68, 266).

Continuing this research, as mentioned above, Berelson presented a synthesis of the 'public library use made during the last two decades', which also includes a national survey. From his analysis he describes the public library user as 'a self-selected minority with special characteristics', which he describes as a 'larger-than-chance-representation of the younger, better schooled culturally alert members of the community' (Berelson, 1949 : ix - xii).

The 'special characteristics' that differentiate public library users, as isolated by Berelson, generally relate to variables of age, education, vocation and occupation. In respect of age, it was found that the library's users were mainly younger adults, about three-quarters of whom were under the age of 35. From the point of view of education, a definite correlation was discovered between public library registration

and use and the length of formal education. Here users with grade-school education (i.e. pre-high school) accounted for between 10% and 15% of users, while college-educated (i.e. high school) users rated about 40% to 60% of public library users. (These figures show a considerable increase on those of the past decade). Women were found to constitute about 50% to 66% of registered library users, although it was found that men tend to use the library more in city areas. Disagreeing with the previous study, students were found to make up the largest occupational group of library users, representing between 25% to 50% of registered users, followed by housewives, who represented from 10% to 33% together with white-collar workers, while the professional and managerial people and wage earners represented about 10% respectively. In general public library users are seen as representing the 'higher' rather than the 'lower' occupations. While Berelson considers that education is the most important determinant of public library reading, he points out that variables of sex and age also have an interrelated influence. Therefore the younger are better educated than the old and men have usually more formal education than women. This situation is also subject to continuous improvement in educational levels which might influence future findings. In his opinion the public library is 'pretty much a middle-class institution', but inasmuch as the rich buy their own books and the poor find problems with reading books, he suggests that the public library is not really representative of the population (Berelson, 1949, 19-40, 125-25).

With regard to data acquired on public library use, it must be noted that problems were encountered as far as lack of general methodological consistency and variable used by each survey was concerned. This is especially evident



in the determination of who is a public library user and the frequency of public library use. Principally this involves the differences between registered borrowers and all library users, and the age limit of adult borrowers, which is generally taken as eighteen years of age, but is sometimes regarded as younger, or conversely as old as twenty-one years. Perhaps the greater problem is deciding on the time period for users, i.e. whether to use the standard three-year registration period or less. As a prime example, the percentage of borrowers over a three-year period is given by Berelson as 25%; if a one-year period is taken, the usage decreases to 18% and if the actual use over a single month is considered, the percentage sinks to a mere 10% (adults were considered as 21 years or more of age). Berelson further argues that if a 'bookreader' is defined as an adult reading one book or more in any one year, almost half the adult population must qualify (Berelson, 1949 : 6-10).

### Conclusions

The studies undertaken by the Chicago <sup>Gradski</sup> School of Library Science which may perhaps be considered as the first really scientific investigations into library use and users, attempted to isolate not only what library users read but also those characteristics and variables which were important in creating reading habits and thus public library users. These early studies found in general that although education was the basic determinant of public library use, it is also influenced by users' cultural awareness and vocational responsibility. Generally, public library users were more representative of the middle-class sections of society. The reading habits of such users were found to exhibit a preference for recreational reading, which indicated a popularity for fiction reading. Reasons or motives for reading were also considered and

investigations indicated a broad spectrum, which ranged from mental stimulation to the attainment of pleasure.

#### 4.1.2.1 INFLUENTIAL FACTORS IN PUBLIC LIBRARY READING: Access and availability

Research has shown that access to books and adequate library facilities plays an important role in fostering reading enthusiasm and library use (Gray & Monroe, 1930 : 259-60). Location, which relates to the distance between the user and the library, is an important determinant of access to libraries. In this respect evidence indicates that the nearer people lived to a library the more they used it (Berelson, 1949 : 43).

The significance of the availability of both books and libraries on reading habits was particularly illustrated by a national survey conducted in the USA in 1938, which showed that adults living in rural areas lagged far behind their urban counterparts in the provision of such amenities (Wilson, 1938 : 434). This factor probably contributed to the fact that reading statistics of rural dwellers were far lower than those in urban areas (Gray & Monroe, 1930 : 37; Asheim, 1955 : 455-56).

#### 4.1.2.2 INFLUENTIAL FACTORS IN PUBLIC LIBRARY READING : Communication and reading.

Inasmuch as language is a system which makes communication possible, and writing the graphic form of communication, reading is the decoding process. Such decoding is achieved in direct relation to the knowledge of

the language and in conjunction with the experience and conceptual abilities of the individual reader (Goodman, 1968 : 15).

Such a system is then used by the reader, who in conjunction with his motives and expectations of satisfaction, finds the text. The reader then reads the text, using his educational and perceptual skills, and finally makes use of the received communication in terms of his original requirements (Hatt, 1976 : 20).

Reading, as the major concern, and indeed the main communication means in the public library, may be seen as reflecting the whole of man's activity, which is communicated by the author, by the sharing of his thoughts, knowledge and experience, with the reader (McClellan, 1973 : 35). More specifically, in terms of recreation, reading is seen as either confirming the reality of man's experience, or permitting an escape from it (Murison, 1955 : 180). In Gray and Monroe's view the public library is perceived as an educational agency, for both pleasure and inspiration. They further perceive that access to good books (cf 3.2.3) is an important factor in the development of broader interests and stimulation of reading habits (Gray & Monroe, 1930 : 38, 262).

Although motives, which encompass a broad continuum between reading for inspiration and reading for pleasure, serve to illustrate the inherent difficulties in accommodating the reading needs of a community, the primary use of the public library, in Martin's view, manifests in the transfer of information, which in turn is judged by its value and benefit to the community served (Martin, 1976 : 486).

4.1.2.3 INFLUENTIAL FACTORS IN PUBLIC LIBRARY READING : The acquisition of reading habits and maturity in reading.

Learning about the world in general is of great importance to the young from the point of view of child recreational forms or play functions. These include the means of mastering their own environment, helping them to acquire competence and self-assurance and thus a powerful motivation to achieve. Play also assists in the practice of adult roles for later life; it may also function as a substitute form of behaviour when direct satisfaction is denied, thereby avoiding frustrations and aggression. Play also takes the imaginative form of make-believe expression, dealing symbolically with the emotions of fear and violence, and as such is of great importance in helping children to adjust their behaviour to socially acceptable levels (Vernon, 1969 : 24). Such play functions are extremely complex and appear not only to be part of childhood but of adult life and behaviour as well (Huizinga, 1938 : 2-8, 28).

In the Gray and Monroe study the acquisition of reading habits is found to start at an early age, and in the home, where the exposure to books in conjunction with a positive and pleasant attitude towards reading from family, friends and teachers provides a secure foundation. Further factors are seen as the importance of efficient schooling and residence within a community which is reasonably intelligent and progressive (Gray & Monroe, 1930 : 269-71).

The early and agreeable introduction to the world of books not only acts as an initial impetus in the acquisition of reading habits, but must also form the basis for the development of ideal or mature reading habits.

Such a reader is characterised by several special attributes. These may be seen as a sense of enthusiasm for reading; a wide range of interests which are not only regenerative but stimulate creative thinking; the ability to comprehend the written communication fully and quickly and to synthesise and utilise information thus obtained, and very importantly the ability to generate and develop his own reading interests (Gray & Rogers, 1956 : 54-56, 231, 243).

Although education has already been isolated as the the major factor that stimulates public library reading (Berelson, 1949 : 24), it does not exist in isolation, but in conjunction with the influence of family background and the compounded factor of experience and exposure to the world at large. Gray and Monroe approach these factors as a concept, which they term 'educational advantage' (1930 : 35-36). This term they define as the effects of a better education, which initially leads to increased reading by providing wider interests, and which subsequently provides increased contact with more people, events and ideas. All these factors in turn act as a continuous stimulant to further reading and thus generate greater reading interests (Gray & Monroe, 1930 : 262).

#### 4.1.2.4 INFLUENTIAL FACTORS IN PUBLIC LIBRARY READING: Reading choices.

In relation to the character or type of the material read, Gray and Monroe found that 95% of the population read newspapers, 75% read magazines and 50% read books (Gray & Monroe 1930 :262). In terms of the type of book read, their data show that 'more than half the books withdrawn were fiction', which they suggest indicates a definite preference for

recreational reading. This finding is further supported by the comment that 'this tendency is verified by practically all circulation data reported by librarians for a number of years' (Gray & Monroe, 1930 : 48-49). In Berelson's study two-thirds of books borrowed were fiction, with 'recent : bestsellers' as a major item, together with 'poor quality books' which Berelson admits do not readily qualify for any 'generally accepted literary standard' and are difficult to define (Berelson, 1949 : 56,59,128).

#### 4.1.2.5 INFLUENTIAL FACTORS IN PUBLIC LIBRARY READING: The purpose of reading and reading motives.

The Gray and Monroe study of 1930 (cf 4.1.1.), and subsequent studies from the Chicago School are usually referred to as the 'Who, What, When and Where' studies, more generally defined by Asheim as 'Who reads what, where does he get it from, and how does it affect him' (Asheim, 1953, : 457).

An important omission from the range of Chicago Graduate Library School studies is the 'why' of reading (Martin, 1976 : 484). This aspect may be seen to involve all the others, in that it constitutes the rationale behind 'who reads what' (Asheim, 1953 : 457). The 'why' of reading, however, should not be ignored and may also be considered as the purpose of reading and thus the basic function of books; it is closely related to such psychological factors as user motives. However, in relation to the nature of user motives, data is frequently found to be biased or inaccurate, in general this stems from the fact that the users themselves are unused to voicing their reading wants as they are reluctant or appear insufficiently articulate (Martin, 1976 : 468, 488-89). Further

emphasising the problem of obtaining reliable user data, Waples points out there is also a difference in users' own expectations, between what users demand and actually read. His findings suggest that once such conditions were isolated, it would be possible to manipulate assessments of reader satisfaction (cf 4.1.3) (Waples, 1932 : 42, 69).

It may be seen that user reading wants are an important aspect of user reading habits as a reflection of user reading motives. In an attempt to investigate this important area of influence, Gray and Monroe cite some 99 'uses' or motives for recreational reading, which will be considered more fully in a further section (cf 4.1.3).

#### 4.1.2.6 FURTHER RESEARCH AND CORRELATIONS WITH THE CHICAGO STUDIES

Findings of a British survey by Luckham in the mid-1960s appear to be generally in agreement with the Chicago studies. He considers that the most important and 'universal' factors in public library usage are those of education, age, and occupation (Luckham, 1971 : xii).

Ward's summary of 123 British public library surveys is in agreement with the findings that educational and occupational factors are essential characteristics of public library users. The surveys which reported levels of educational attainment indicated that half of the respondents (i.e. registered public library users) had received a secondary (i.e. post-primary or grade school) education and 32,2% a university education. While the data of age and gender are not specifically mentioned, in general public library users come from groups who had enjoyed a longer

period of formal education, greater cultural awareness as a result of influences emanating from stimulating home environments, and a higher occupational standing than non-users (Ward, 1977 : 28-39).

#### 4.1.2.7 INFLUENTIAL FACTORS IN PUBLIC LIBRARY READING: Conclusions

Reading may be seen to be primarily a technical skill which relates not only to the gaining of information and knowledge, but one which is positively linked to the process of life and living. However, books serve not only to instruct and further stimulate development for the future, but are capable of providing satisfaction for a wide range of user wants.

The acquisition of reading habits would appear to be a combination of interlinked user characteristics and influences. These are initially associated with the level of education, and originate in the early and comfortable association with books with the encouragement of family friends and teachers, against the background of a positive environment. This process is further enhanced by a wider experience of the world which Gray and Monroe define as the concept of the 'educational advantage' (cf 4.1.2.2). Further important factors include the availability of books, access to public libraries and the determination of reading choices which are seen as arising from a wide and complex range of motives and interests.

To summarise those characteristics which tend to distinguish public library users, most studies found that education is the greatest determinant of both reading and public library use, and that those who



read the most and who are public library users are generally better educated and have more training. Such characteristics tended to be exhibited by those who were under 40, were students and who had a professional training. Readers were mostly married, and more women than men used the public library. Reading choices indicated that newspapers were read by most people, and when books were read it was found that fiction reading for recreational purposes was the most popular (4.1.2.1).

Concerning the biographical characteristics and influential factors which lead not only to the development of the reading habit but public library use, it may be appreciated that two aspects stand out as definite prerequisites for the attainment of the reading habit and public library use: firstly sufficient education, not only to be able to read, but to generate an interest in the world at large (ie educational advantage) and secondly the motivation to make use of books in the daily business of living.

Although the 'why' of reading relates to the all-important purpose or user-motives involved (4.1.2.5), this area appears to lack fuller research as the subject is both complex and limiting in terms of the collection of accurate data. Subsequent sections will consider not only reading motives in greater depth, but the different directions and avenues explored by studies in user research.

#### 4.1.3 PUBLIC LIBRARY READING: The importance of motives

At the foundation of any enterprise is an action, and nothing may happen until the individual concerned wishes to act. The form such eventual action takes depends upon why, and also how strongly, the individual wishes to act (Gellerman, 1963 : 7).

Such wants may be seen as a response to a stimulus, or the result of a deprivation or lack. Such a lack seeks to obtain something considered pleasurable or to avoid something painful or unpleasant : (Jordaan et al. 1975 : 808). It may also be temporary or long-lasting and may range from the superficial to the highly personal (Vernon, 1969 : 138).

In relation to leisure reading, user wants may be categorised as being (a) unfelt or unactivated, which can only be assumed; (b) unexpressed, which are considered by Totterdell to spring from the ignorance or apathy of the reader, the ineffectiveness of the library, or the effective competition from other agencies; or (c) an expressed desire, which may be of an intentional or unintentional nature. The latter is seen as being at the back of the user's mind and, from researches, to be potentially of greater importance (Totterdell, 1978 : 15-16).

Many models have been constructed to place underlying human motives or wants, into a rational framework, and possibly one of the most famous was developed by Maslow, in the form of a hierarchy, to determine their relationship to each other and the potential for development of the individual. The hierarchy begins with the individual's requirements of

the biological dependence on food, sleep and sex. When these have been satisfied, the individual looks for both personal safety and the assurance that the biological requirements will continue to be met. Social requirements and esteem relate to the individual's want of love and affection, no less than the confirmation of his abilities by their acceptance by others. Finally, the desire for personal growth, or self-actualisation, is the position which can develop when the individual is unencumbered by other demands and is able to divert his energies or motivations to develop his own inner abilities (Maslow, 1970 (1954) : 35 ff; Maslow, 1962 : 21 ff; Stuart & Eastlick 1977 : 132; Hatt, 1976 : 41; Totterdell, 1978 : 10; Smith, J, 1977 : 65-66).

Another model links basic needs with positive motives, which stem from learning to seek and avoid what is desired and feared respectively. Social motives underlying basic need relate to such aspects as self-mastery, social approval, conformity, subsistence and sex. Higher motives are by definition more altruistic in intent and reflect a dedication to the ideals of honour and morality, and the development of conscience (Sperling, 1957 : 184-94). As far as reading motives are concerned, Coetzee cites the paramount importance of the will to power, to cultural excellence through self-education, to gaining insight, to establishing social contact and to escape the dullness of every day events (Coetzee, 1977 : xi).

A sufficiently strong desire generates the energy to seek an adjustment and, together with what the mind perceives to be the answer or goal towards which to channel the energies, is considered a motive (Jordaan et al.

1975 : 789-808). Such a motive may also be considered as the 'what' and 'why' of any form of human action or behaviour (Sperling, 1957 : 183): and it may also be seen as a form of tension. Should such a motive be thwarted by obstacles, usually of a social or physical nature, which delay or prevent satisfaction, a sense of frustration or failure and stress will arise (Vernon, 1969 : 133-34).

Motives are usually identified by the goals with which they are associated, and many models have been developed which seek to encompass such human activity. These range between notions of conflict and fulfillment, to those of defence and gratification (Maddi, 1976 : 21-23, 35, 94). Other hypotheses suggest that in striving to avoid discomfort in life, the individual will seek to control as much as possible of his environment (Gellerman, 1963 : 178; Byrne, 1974 : 178-79).

Statements by authorities suggest that the workings of the mind are seen as a system of energy, where mental ideas are generated and pleasure obtained by their reduction or resolution. A wide body of opinion see wishes or daydreams also as aimed at achieving of pleasure or springing from an unpleasant source of deprivation. Thus it may be seen that it is through the discharging of tensions stemming from unsatisfied wants that pleasure may be obtained (Jordaan, et al. 1975 : 785; Freud, 1955 (1922) : 7).

Such fantasies are defined by Holland as 'a representation of the ego of a cluster of wishes, derived in the final instance, from basic drives'. Fantasies may involve such factors as defence and conflict and give rise

to simple gratification of complex pleasures through the 'mastery over conflict-arousing ideas' (Holland, 1977 : 295-97).

With regard to public library leisure reading, the 'why' or motives for reading are more difficult to isolate, but are of fundamental importance to reading choices (cf. 4.1.2.5). Gray & Monroe list almost a hundred such motives which they term 'Uses for recreational reading', the most popular being the reading 'for diversion' (1930 : 62). The list ranges from the most purposeful, such as the gaining of general knowledge or understanding human nature, to a love of reading and reading for pleasure and, at the more emotional extreme, to get away from real life, to satisfy the emotions or to relieve loneliness (Gray & Monroe, 1930 : 62-64).

Attempting to pursue this avenue of research and place it in some more logical form, Waples, Berelson and Bradshaw, all of the Chicago Graduate Library School, considered the effect that reading has on the reader, as a reflection of his or her motives. These include the instrumental effect, which involves relief from feelings of inferiority by increasing personal self-esteem; closely associated with this is the reinforcement effect, which provides the reader with reassurance by reaffirming his own attitudes and opinions; the aesthetic effect, derived from works of artistic and literary merit. Finally, there is the respite effect, i.e. the temporary release of the mind from the pressures of anxiety and tension, by providing a more pleasant and agreeable replacement or substitute for the mind. As a general classification, they suggest that all reading motives fall into two main categories, viz inward-looking or intra-personal, (which concern the reader) or outward-looking or inter-

personal (which concern the reader and his relationship with others) (Waples, Berelson & Bradshaw, 1940 : 92-95, 116-23).

More than one motive may be employed with regard to leisure reading, as an example, reading to learn involves aspects of prestige reading, while respite or escapist reading may remove the reader temporarily from the elements of reality which may imply conflicts in his relationships with others. To accommodate this difficulty Schramm proposes a 'Psychological learning theory model', according to which individual social development involves a process of trial and error in learning, to enable the reader to fit into society. This suggests that it is not so much the type of reading which is important to the reader, but the manner in which it is read (Schramm, 1955 : 77-78).

Summarising the inherent problems involved in the determination of public library user reading wants, Schramm relates user expectations of satisfaction, which in effect incorporates their motives, to the effort users are prepared to expend, thus constructing a general rule for the choice of reading. This rule is known as 'Schramm's fraction of selection'. viz

$$\frac{\text{The expectation of reward}}{\text{The effort required}} = \frac{\text{The probability of choice}}{\text{of choice}}$$

(Waples, 1932 : 69; Schramm, 1956 : 64; Schramm, 1973 : 107).

## Conclusions

In general these studies have shown the great importance of the presence of motives in reader choice of books which is a reflection of their perceived expectation of satisfaction. It also suggests that users' underlying motives which generate their reading wants are often multiple in application and of such deep emotional standing that they are neither discernible nor perhaps even admitted to the reader himself, and thus making research extremely difficult.

### 4.1.4 EXPLORATION OF WIDER FIELDS OF RESEARCH.

Other research studies generally address sociological and psychological aspects of reading and include the important subject of user reading motives. This direction attracted the attention of several well-known writers on the subject, including James Wellard, Pierce Butler and Nicholas Rubakin. The latter in particular had carried out surveys for many years in the field of the psychology of reading, and in 1916 presented a theory which he termed 'bibliopsychology' (Karetzky, 1982 : 222). This field of research sought to consider the inner motives and psychological process involved in reading, as a means of understanding the role of libraries in society (Simsova, 1968 : 8).

Following this scientific direction, a study was undertaken in 1933 by Jeannette Howard Foster who attempted to relate fiction reading to the socio-economic characteristics of its readers, correlating such characteristics to the quality of fiction read. Her understanding of the importance of the psychological factors is summed up in the final

paragraph in which she says 'tell me what you read and I will tell you what you are' (Foster, 1936 : 124 - 74). At a conference of librarians in the same year, Foster told delegates that her work was only a beginning in the search to answer the questions of why people read: such answers, she suggests, are to be found in scientific areas which are as yet unexplored (Karetzky, 1982 : 321).

In the late 1930s a further development in this direction was to appear, namely the theory of bibliotherapy. Such a theory not only linked personality characteristics with reading, but in general linked medicine with education. Bibliotherapy saw reading as a way to develop mature emotions and so sustain mental health (Karetzky, 1982 : 224-25). This theory includes many of the motives and emotional satisfactions as expressed by professional psychologists in the 1950s and 1960s (cf. 4.1.5) including the concept of catharsis, as the release of tension by means of symbolic gratification (cf. 4.2.3) (Haldeman & Idstein, 1977 : 1-5).

Further studies investigating the sociological aspects of reading related the reader to his community together with his motives for reading (cf 4.1.3), (Waples, 1933; Carnovsky, 1934; 1935) and were also extended to examine the characteristics of the non-user and his reasons for shunning the public library (Ridgeway, 1936). Because this research approach provides such limited opportunities for obtaining quantifiable data and virtually exhausted all accessible avenues, subsequent studies tended either to overlap or merely to update existing information, and it was not until the late 1960s that a relatively new orientation emerged. The new direction was inaugurated by Peter Mann, a sociologist (rather than a



librarian) who was concerned with the purpose for which books are read. Mann related reading to the length of time a book is used, and to such factors as to whether it is owned and referred to frequently, or merely read once. The sociological model of leisure, or recreational, reading he constructed uses the twin poles of work and leisure (Mann & Burgoyne, 1969 : 68).

This model was developed later into a tripartite division designated as utilitarian reading, which is generally used for reference purposes only. Social reading, which includes titles reviewed and 'recommended by opinion leaders', reading for self-improvement is included in this category and books may be read and re-read and tend to challenge the reader's own attitudes. Finally, the category of personal reading includes reading for 'distraction' where books are usually read only once. Books in the category tend to reinforce readers' attitudes (Mann, 1969 : 68; 1971 : 8).

This exhibits a wide divergence of perspective when compared with the more 'academic' model for reading provided by Coetzee, who relates the differing complexities of written material to the intelligence of the reader. Here reading matter is divided into subject literature and works of a literary nature (belles-lettres). The latter is further divided into three categories by literary merit and the educational abilities of the reader: literature, which is considered to be of high artistic merit providing a depth of understanding for a small élite readership; a para-literary category which has less depth but is for reasonably intelligent readers and includes the more serious best-sellers; and finally, a mass

or popular literary category, which includes similar genres but is addressed to readers of average and below average intelligence (Coetzee, 1977 : xv).

Using social development as a perspective, Landheer suggests that reading motives are related to the social situation and state of the individual. At the most hazardous and insecure, he places devotional reading, which he feels reflects feelings or situations of uncertainty. This is followed by cultural reading and achievement reading, both of which suggest more progressive periods of growth and stability (Landheer, 1950 : 19, 32, 51, 72).

Difficulties in determining users' reading motives accurately (cf 4.1.2.5), are also evident from the sparseness of significant developments that have subsequently taken place. This is attributed to the fact that such studies of public library reading choices fall within the fields of psychological and sociological research, and as such are (as already suggested by Foster) considered to be outside the library's frame of reference (Martin, 1973 : 486). Monroe disagrees with this attitude and considers that one of the problems with the proper evaluation of adult library services is the failure to make use of the techniques available in such fields (Monroe, 1974 : 349).

### Conclusions

Public library user research shows a distinct alignment with the disciplines of sociology and psychology, where not only inner or underlying motives, but the process of reading is considered. Relationships between socio-

economic conditions and reading tastes are explored together with the purpose for which books are read. In this direction a sociological model provides poles of reading as being those of work and leisure. However the basic problem emphasised appears to be not only the limited avenues available for such research but the methodology that should be employed to obtain the desired data, the suggestion being made that this should be in a more scientific direction.

In relation to the many variables involved in these researches, most of which are of a psychological nature and include such aspects as emotional satisfactions, the mental health and inner motives of the individual reader, it may be appreciated that these are conditioned by the reader's own characteristics and socio-economic situation. Such conditioning is exhibited by the reader's areas of interest or concern which give rise to reading wants. The satisfaction of such wants, in turn, is limited by the reader's own perceptions and expectations. Ideally users' reading wants require some form of measurement to determine their nature and intensity. Such measurement might be provided by Maslow's hierarchical model of needs (cf 4.1.3), which could be employed as a theoretical standard against which to assess where users' emotional wants lie.

#### 4.2 RECREATIONAL READING SATISFACTIONS: An investigation of the characteristics of fiction

In view of the long history of fiction reading among the general public, and amount of adverse criticism it has received, this section seeks to explore the satisfactions that fiction has to offer. This will be in conjunction with some discussion of the characteristics of fiction and its

categories, genres and values, culminating in a model which will be tested empirically. Finally it is hoped to present a general conclusion to this literature survey from which it is proposed to develop a research proposition in relation to the problem raised in the first chapter (cf 1.1).

#### 4.2.1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FICTION

Fiction has often been termed an imitation of life, and has often been slighted for that very reason. However, some authorities claim that it is a much more profound representation of human reality. Fiction is a portrayal of a special world which is created by man himself; it represents a symbolic and an imagined world, one which encompasses a sphere of human knowledge larger in scale than that which can be apprehended by the individual (Schramm, 1949 : 469-71, 476). This world also commands its own sense of logic, security, idealism and excitement (Dyer, 1975 : 44).

The writing of fiction is an art, an art concerned with the presentation of a view of the world as an aspect of human activities and interrelationships becoming manifest in the fabric of a created environment (McKenzie, 1969 : 2). Fiction may be seen, too, as a reflection of the flux of change, thus aiding the reader in the challenge of responding to the continuous changes in the environment which relentlessly demand adjustments to the vicissitudes of life (Sperling, 1957 : 182).

As a total process, fiction is considered to comprise a written message which the reader must both comprehend and process (cf 4.1.2). Therefore, to have any importance or relevance, or to bestow benefits on him, this task of processing and comprehending must be within his educational abilities and his experience of the world (Goodman, 1968 : 15). Hence the mere decision to read constitutes a total act. The manner in which he will act involves many other factors, which include availability of material, other alternatives and his motives (cf 4.1.4; 4.1.5) all of which will cluster and blend together at the moment of decision (Schramm, 1956 : 85).

One of the most distinctive characteristics of fiction is its appeal to the emotions (cf. 2.2.1.4; 4.1.3; 4.2.2). Many prevailing theories on the subject suggest that emotions form a primary position in the human motivational system (Izard, 1977 : 3). Pleasant human emotions include those of love, joy, interest and excitement, while unpleasant emotions are associated with hate, fear, aggression and anxiety (Vernon, 1979 : 72). Pleasant emotions may flourish in an atmosphere where the problems facing the individual - requiring critical adjustments to cope with the changes in his environment - are not of sufficient force to cause tension, pain or discomfort but over which he is indeed able to prevail (Sperling, 1957 : 161-165).

#### 4.2.2 THE ATTAINMENT OF SATISFACTION THROUGH FICTION READING

Fiction, as an imaginative literary form, Lesser suggests, is read partly to satisfy those desires and needs which the world has not provided, or

has provided inadequately, and which are largely of an unconscious or unacknowledged nature. This form of reading offers the reader the means to come to terms with his environment in a more rational and infinitely more logical and acceptable manner. Such needs may be best seen, perhaps, in the extremes of unrequited love and the continuing struggle to compete in the world at large - struggles and disappointments which may be experienced vicariously in the world of fiction reading. Such a world of fantasy as fiction may richly provide for the reader does not necessarily act as a means of 'escape' from the real world (cf 4.2.4) but, in fact, by relating to the innermost conflicts of readers', offers the very opposite. Although popular fiction has long been held in disrepute because of fears that it would generate uncontrolled emotions (cf 2.2.3) together with feelings of guilt through the gratification of desires, fantasy, in common with day-dreaming, it serves to objectify the unconscious and repressed desires or needs of the individual, thus rendering them more amenable to solution. The fulfillment of reading wants may be defined not so much as the gratification of the baser desires, as often argued, but as the attainment of inner truths and the achieving of inner peace by the resolution or defusion of fears. However, fiction reading, although based upon symbolic and imaginary fulfillment, generates emotional feelings that are no less 'real' to the reader (Lesser, 1960 : 50-55, 41, 265, 251-254, 275).

As the primary manner in which fiction provides satisfaction, perhaps the dramatic genre of tragedy best illustrates the mechanisms which permit the interplay of spectator and participant response and allow for the construction and defusion of emotional tension (Lesser, 1950 : 270-72,

251). This drama-form, based on the interplay of two opposing types of emotion, was well known in classical history. Aristotle, who fully understood such literary constructions, considered the aim of drama as a means of arousing fear and pity, then by means of 'the outraging of the sensibilities', to produce pleasure by the final restoration of order (Aristotle, Poetics [1963] ; 21-27).

Tragedy is a form of action where the reader identifies with the hero figure, who through an accident or fatal mistake, fails to resolve his problems or conflicts and which ultimately lead to his downfall (Bodkin, 1932 : 22-24; Lesser, 1950 : 244-45, 249). Between the sense of fear aroused in the spectator and the final pity at the hero's downfall a tension is created artificially, and this is then discharged by the reconciliation with normality. At the same time, the spectator gains relief by relinquishing his initial identification with the hero and thus his fate. The mechanism of tragedy may be seen as the crucial shift of roles which permits the emotions to be purged at a safe distance, providing a cathartic form of relief, and - with the accompanying defusion of tensions - i e mental refreshment by the release of stimulated emotions (Lesser, 1950 : 249).

The general consensus suggests that for emotional relief any form of action will contribute to the reduction of tension by using up the excess emotional energy, which is generated in response to an emergency state. Comedy, in particular, with its aspects of humour and laughter, helps to ease a situation where an emotional reinterpretation or adjustment is not

possible, and will prevent a difficult situation from becoming worse (Sperling, 1957 : 167-68).

Although fiction offers a complex variety of satisfactions, for which several models have been proposed (cf. 4.1.4), these may be effectively accommodated by considering three main aspects: (a) reading to learn; (b) reading to solve problems; and (c) reading to release tension (Lesser, 1950 : 264-66; Mann, 1971 : 161-62).

Schramm considers that reading to learn ideally encompasses all three, being a purposeful and direct satisfaction which includes those attributes associated with the mature reader (cf. 4.1.2.3) and satisfactions relating to good literature (cf. 4.2.4). Thus the motivation to explore and learn about the world increases personal competence to deal with life (Schramm, 1955 : 80).

Experts agree, however, that any new knowledge (whether slight or profound) provides a degree of enlightenment, thereby increasing the reader's ability to solve problems (Zaaiman, 1981 : 47; Weigand, 1980 : 1-11).

Reading to solve problems relates particularly to the unconscious desires of the reader, which he will not or cannot acknowledge (cf. 4.1.3), but which he can satisfy under the controlled conditions that such reading provides. Here the reader is permitted, at will, to face the concerns and priorities of his life at any distance, safe from pain, guilt, or fear. Problem-solving reading not only allows, but encourages, the reader to



objectify his concerns, to increase his understanding of them, and enables him to seek their resolution with the information gained. This is, in effect, the wider experience of another - that of the author (Lesser, 1950 : 52-57, 151-52, 179, 188).

Another area of fiction-satisfaction is that of the release of emotional tension, which may be achieved by means of an artificial construction of tension in a plot, where, similar to tragedy, a catharsis is possible. With the conflict of two emotions in the participant and spectator responses, these are displaced and all tension becomes defused with the resolution of the plot. An excellent example of such a tension construction may be observed in the play of acrobats (Lesser, 1950 : 43, 138, 168, 251-54).

In general terms, fiction reading makes possible a degree of physical relaxation, together with mental relaxation or respite, through the shifting of the concentration, resulting in physical and mental refreshment (Lesser, 1950 : 55; Waples, Berelson & Bradshaw, 1940 : 123).

Like the body, the mind also requires exercise, and when bored or tired of the world around it, will recreate its own world within the limits of its own experience (Shera, 1972 : 8). However, reading, as compared with other leisure activities, requires the reader to recreate the narrative for himself (Mann, 1971 : 163), thereby enabling him to enter the world of others, and so enrich and develop his own (McClellan, 1973 : 41). Thus it may be seen that by the very widening of the areas with which the mind is familiar, the imagination is, necessarily, both expanded and developed

(Murison, 1955 : 185) by creative thinking and understanding of the world (Lesser, 1950 : 164-65).

As may be seen, the determination of reading choices is a very complex process, which includes both ideological and more materialistic aspects, and which in the end is not really simply a matter of chance (Schucking, 1931 (1924) : preface). But it is the individual form of response to any book which serves to confirm that it is only the reader himself who may accurately assess the worth of any book, for it is he who finally determines the purpose for which the book shall be read (Murison, 1955 : 176-77, 181-84).

This purpose, in terms of fiction reading, is principally the provision of pleasure and relief, by providing emotional satisfactions which are achieved by the symbolic solving, displacement or imaginary fulfilment of the cause of tension (Jordaan et al., 1975 : 787-89). But by exercising the imagination, the reader gains a new awareness of other worlds (Botha, 1985 : 1-3) so both enlarging and deepening his understanding (Neill, 1985 : 167) - and the net result is the personal growth of the individual (Benge, 1970 : 102).

At best, a work of fiction is capable of allowing the reader to move around in a 'symbolic world which is inaccessible to him in life', providing experiences from a fresh perspective (Shrodes, 1976 : 137-38).

In terms of the relationship of the public library and its users regarding fiction reading, the experience appears to have been awkward, leading to

what Hinton describes as a rift between the two. He suggests that public libraries disseminate a 'potent uncensored mix of dreams, fantasies, fictions and desires' to all levels of society, and that the library is not only largely unaware of or ignorant of this but generally is contemptuous of what is not only the larger part of its bookstock but the 'backbone' of the service (Hinton, 1984 : 76).

### Conclusions

The satisfaction obtained from fiction reading not only stems from its ability to express human ideas but its stimulation of both thought and imagination. From the primary sources of drama in the ancient world fiction writing has provided the means of attaining satisfaction through the artificial arousal of the emotions of fear and pity, ultimately producing pleasure in the final release of tension. Modern fiction provides not only symbolic fulfilment of desires not otherwise available to the reader, but through the more controlled and rational world that it creates, readers may objectivity with their problems at a safe distance. Thus fiction provides the means not only for the release of tension and problem solving, but of enriching the imagination and increasing understanding through the sharing of the experiences of the writer.

#### 4.2.3 FICTION READING: Categories and attributes.

The field of fiction is a 'species of literature which is concerned with the narration of imaginary events and characters' (Oxford English Dictionary, 1933). The term derives from those of 'fashion', 'form' and also 'feign' and is considered as being not so much opposed to fact, but

'as an invention to entertain, or by its suggestion of reality to teach'. It is said (Aristotle, of poetry versus history) (cf 4.2.4) that 'a fiction may approximate a general truth more closely than a particular fact'. The term 'fiction' is now generally limited to the prose novel and the short story (Dictionary of World Literary Terms, 1977 : 119).

For the purposes of this study, the fictional form of the novel is the main concern. This is further defined by Chambers' dictionary as 'fictitious prose which presents a picture of real life, especially in the life-history of the men and women portrayed'. Attributes are defined as 'qualities or values which are ascribed to a particular entity' (Chambers' twentieth century dictionary, 1977).

The need for categorisation within the structure of different types of fiction arose from the time of its origin. This began with Defoe (cf 2.1.1.4) and has since been embellished and developed by subsequent writers into a general structure which would accommodate most novels. Thus such generic terms as 'form', 'kind' and 'type' which are frequently used to qualify categories of fiction, while implying different shades of meaning, often tend to be used interchangeably. The precisely nuanced meanings thus implied also reflect something of the nature of the structure. 'Form' is normally related to literary style or philosophical traditions such as realism or romanticism. 'Kind' sees such classes as historical or biographical, which in turn may be epic or dramatic in presentation. 'Type' usually denotes category by technique, such as the 'stream-of-consciousness' tradition. Although Haines suggests that any typology of fiction tends to be an arbitrary one, essentially the

function of categorisation is to provide a base or conceptual framework for criticism, and to serve as an 'index' or 'guide' for the general reader (Haines, 1942 : 18-23). It also serves as a 'common basis' for both evaluation and the application of standards (cf McColvin, 1925 : 27).

However, the basis for such categorisation is derived from the application of literary criteria, as discussed in Chapter 3 (cf 3.2; 3.2.1; 3.2.2; 3.2.3). The hierarchical structure of levels of literary quality is evident from a model proposed by Carter and Bonk (cf 3.2.3), encompassing in descending order of presumed literary merit, :

'Great literature, good literature and popular literature' (Carter & Bonk, 1959 : 104-5).

A comparable three-tier typology was also employed by Carnovsky in a survey considered as part of the early studies produced by the Chicago Graduate School of Library Science in the 1930s (cf 4.1.1). This model displays a slight shift in emphasis away from the 'high-brow' literary categorisation of Carter and Bonk, towards a structure reflecting a greater awareness of the more popular categories of fiction, such as the bestseller. The Carnovsky model is arranged in a literary hierarchy and includes the categories of 'standard authors', which is characterised by such authors as Dickens, Hardy and Conrad; 'good modern' by Cather, Pearl Buck, Sinclair Lewis. 'Light modern' is related to the genres of 'mystery and detective, western and love stories'. Carnovsky also experienced difficulties with categorisation, which he attributed to such factors as the range of fiction, and differing shades of literary opinion, conceding

that the categories used in the survey were of necessity arbitrary to a certain extent (Carnovsky, 1935 : 16-17).

In his work of 1983, Mann outlines his three-tiered schema for categories of fiction, which again is by literary merit, viz (a) 'literary novels' (i.e. 'serious works of the imagination'), (b) the 'bestseller' (i.e. including fiction which leans either towards the 'more serious novel' or towards 'light fiction'), (c) the formula-style novel, whose function is seen as more 'time-filling' than intellectual and which is written for 'entertainment and escapism'. Such categorisation, as already suggested by Haines in this section, is important, in that it may be used to guide public users to the type of books they wish either to buy or request (Mann, 1982 : 17, 55).

As Mann's schema appears to approximate public library user preferences more realistically, as suggested in the professional literature (cf 2.2.3; 2.3.1.9; 2.4.2), it will be used as the basis for the ensuing discussion on the categories of fiction and its attributes.

Literary or standard authors such as Dickens, may be roughly equated with 'classical writers' in the Longman's companion to English literature designation for novelists of the higher literary merit. Longman defines such authors as 'those writers and works that have attracted most interest during the last fifty years...', exceptions being made for selected contemporary novelists (Longman, 1978 : Preface). Concurring with Longman's appraisal, Brower associates this category with 'good books' (cf 3.2.3), in accordance with Berelson's designation of such works

as 'recognised classics and highly regarded contemporary writing' (Brower, 1962 : 31-32). 'Good books' are likewise associated with higher levels of education by Haines, who supports Adler's contention that the 'mastery of the great books' of the world 'is the art of getting a liberal education ' (Haines, 1950 : 34).

Broadus defines literature of classical authorship - which encompasses the genres of poetry, drama, fiction, letters, public addresses, essays and satire - as 'creative' writing. Concurring with Longman's criteria for classical literature, Broadus suggests that the final determination of literary works in terms of their enduring value is perhaps the most common-sensical approach to adopt in a matter of such dispute (Broadus, 1973 : 284-5).

Haines considers the element of creativity an aspect of paramount importance in the definition of the works of the highest literary merit. Hence she accords a special status to 'imaginative writing', equating such products of the human artistic mind with their counterparts in the realm of the fine arts, music and the theatre. Haines cites Edith Sitwell's contention that the purpose of art and literature is to increase our vitality and to 'provide a more passionate sense of life and living' that will not only enrich life, but by encouraging development and adding experience will eventually heighten the collective consciousness of society. For that minority of readers who possess the ability and capacity to appreciate literature, it provides at best 'sustenance for the mind and inspiration for the spirit' (Haines, 1950 : 23,29,49-50,419).

The world of great literature, as seen by Mann, is one of new ideas and viewpoints, which aims at the stimulation of intellectual thought (Mann, 1971 : 15). This is achieved through the medium of serious works of imagination which contribute to thought and culture, presenting a deeper analysis of its 'personalities, motives and events' than that found in works of a lesser literary standard (Mann, 1982 : 17,42). Thus it may be seen that the criteria applied to distinguish between classical and lighter fiction do not only involve such factors as levels of literary craftsmanship, but also the potential of individual works of fiction to create mental stimulation (Mann, 1971 : 15).

The categorisation of works of fiction by literary merit with a view to the practical application of such divisions in public libraries may perhaps be demonstrated most effectively by the adoption of such criteria as those used to shortlist novels for literary prizes, criteria which Mann considers 'reasonably objective'. He suggests that an important and underlying factor in such award-winning novels is that they are written solely to express the imagination of the writer rather than for their market potential (Mann, 1982 : 42).

Attributes of literary works relate not only to the stimulation of the intellect and imagination: the actual value placed upon 'good books' is associated with the provision of knowledge and its crucial relation to education in the promotion of the social goals of progress and prosperity (Landheer, 1950 : 72). Thus 'value of the demand' (cf 3.2.3) may be determined in terms of the degree to which it may foster 'the purposes of human endeavour', i e to help advance the human development



and happiness (Drury, 1930 : 239 -41). Lesser maintains that the value of classical literature is that it not only epitomises the highest level of literary writing but that it may be regarded as offering the greatest inner satisfaction to the reader (Lesser, 1950 : 107, 254).

The assessment of the category which Carnovsky denotes 'good modern' fiction may be better demonstrated by the exposition of a continuum of fiction-reading categories which embraces the clearly defined poles of classical literature and lighter fiction - the latter being identified as stereotyped formula novels (Mann, 1971 : 15). Between these two poles a large range of books of varying quality will be found (Mann, 1982 : 18), the core of which is typically characterised 'bestsellers' (Mann, 1971a : 15).

As the term 'bestseller' implies, the basis of such a category is its popularity, and one which is brought to the notice of the reading public through favourable reviews in newspapers and journals, as well as by word of mouth (Mann, 1971a : 42). Such favourable reviews are important in that they may be a reflection of powerful social demand (Spiller, 1971 : 52): it is reasonably self-evident that successful sales tend to be taken as a reliable measure of contemporary collective levels of reader satisfaction. In this category, Mann places novels of lesser literary merit, written by authors who feature less prominently in reviews, and yet are regarded by the literary critics as more serious writers (Mann, 1982 : 42-43).

Bestseller titles are known to be read at times for social reasons, which reflect a desire for the conferring of status or effecting self-

improvement (cf 3.1.1) (Mann & Burgoyne, 1969 : 61). Titles in this category are also subject to the fluctuations of fashion (Spiller, 1971 : 90), enjoying a measure of success which is often short-lived (Mann, 1971a : 15).

Light fiction, as already mentioned, is characterised by a lack of any intellectual pretensions on the part of both writer and reader. It is often referred to as the stereotyped formula novel - a category of fiction which includes such genres as romances, 'thrillers' and 'old-fashioned westerns'. Such novels are typically based on highly predictable story lines. Reading them is usually associated with the motives of 'distraction' and 'escapism', as these works generally provide entertainment without requiring much effort on the part of the reader (Mann & Burgoyne, 1969 : 65-67). Lighter fiction is also credited with the attributes of providing compensation and vicarious experience for those whose lives or jobs are dull or lacking interest (Mann, 1971a : 162).

Although Coetzee maintains that the 'popular' or 'mass' categories of fiction 'are addressed to readers of average or below-average intelligence' (cf 4.1.4) (Coetzee, 1977 : xv), such an assumption is refuted by both Murison and Mann, who assert that so-called 'popular' fiction, particularly as regards the lighter type, is not the preserve of the lowly educated alone, but is read by adults of all levels of educational attainment and social standing, including academics and highly skilled professionals (Murison, 1971 (1955): 71; Mann, 1969b : 5).

In Mann's opinion, good, if unknown contemporary literary fiction is often purchased by public libraries at the expense of a user demand for more popular fiction, the rationale cited is the need to provide 'culture' for a minority readership. However, as Mann points out, not only is such buying for an unknown public 'hazardous' but while much encouragement is given by public libraries to the development of an appreciation of 'good' reading and the values of 'literature', on the grounds of promoting 'high culture', such assumptions are rarely supported with empirical evidence (Mann, 1982 : 56-57, 156-57).

Thus, even the problem of discriminating between the bestseller and lighter fiction is part of the larger issue as to whether or not recreational fiction should be promoted at the expense of classical literature. The answer to this perennial debate, as Carter and Bonk perceive it, relates to the inherent conflict between the stated objectives of the public library (cf 3.1.2), and the spontaneous needs of the library's reading public (Carter & Bonk, 1969 : 2-3, 82).

Evidence that works of fiction are most commonly categorised in a form of literary hierarchy of upper, middle and lower levels is also discernible from the works on book selection cited at the end of Chapter 3. Here the initial division is generally that of 'literature' and 'fiction', with the lighter genres of fiction, where mentioned, forming a third category (cf 3.2.3).

The general use of a three-tiered categorisation of fiction is further suggested by the more recent model proposed by Coetzee (cf 4.1.4), which

is divided, first, into works of 'subject literature' of a factual or expository nature, and of the 'literature' of aesthetic creativity. In the case of the latter, he classes works of classical literature at the first level, followed by a second subdivision, 'para-literature', and a third level designated as 'popular fiction' at the base. This model resembles the one proposed by Carter and Bonk. Both accord a higher literary value to the criteria underlying their schema than the model proposed by Carnovsky, to which earlier reference has been made.

Other methods of categorisation of public library reading have been proposed by several eminent writers on the subject. These have been discussed in differing contexts, and in general reflect the purpose or motivation behind user reading preferences as perceived by professional librarians and sociologists. Reading as a direct reflection of the social concerns of the moment is suggested by Landheer, with a model of 'Devotional, cultural and achievement' reading needs (cf 4.1.4). Haines recommends the provision of books for 'Inspiration, information and recreation' while Mann proposes in a sociological study that public library reading may be seen to encompass the needs for reading for 'utilitarian, social and personal' purposes. However, these models for reading, in common with Coetzee's more comprehensive schema, are unsuitable for the purposes of this study as specified, as they include the vast range of works generally categorised as non-fiction, which is not under investigation here.

To devise the most practical method of categorising public library fiction reading, it appears that Mann, who has studied the subject of

fiction reading exhaustively (Mann, 1982 : 157-61) offers the most practical basis upon which to develop a model for empirical testing, in relation to that in general use in the Cape Town City Library Service.

A statement on guidelines for book selection policy by Cape Town City Library Service was published during the early-mid 1970's (and as far as can be ascertained (personal communication: Assistant City Librarian, 1987), has not been officially revised). In terms of this statement, books are purchased to fulfil the public library objectives, which are based on those published by the LA in 1971 (cf 3.1.2). Thus for the objective of education, the public library seeks to provide for 'the informational educational needs of the community' and background material for formal study; for information, as a 'basic public source of balanced knowledge and information'; for culture, by 'making accessible to library users the cultural heritage of all people and ages', together with materials for the creative use of leisure time'. Standards for the purchase of materials for recreational reading are 'judged on merit only', which includes bestsellers which have 'some literary value', but excludes the purchase of ephemera. The guidelines state that the Library's bookstock should 'include a full stock of all the best works of the world's greatest authors' (CTLS [1974] : 1-5). While these rather rigid literary standards have softened a little and blurred over the intervening years, the guidelines for 'bestsellers' can perhaps be modified by 'well known writers'. Thus common usage provides an informal classification schema of A fiction, including works of classical and contemporary classical fiction writers (determined by entries in the Oxford Companion to Literature); B fiction of bestsellers, as reviewed in the media

together with other writers of similar standard, and also a final category of C fiction which includes writers of light but not poor quality fiction.

As may be seen, the books and authorities consulted on the subject of fiction reading and book selection tend not only to categorise fiction from the point of view of literary merit but to place the resultant categories into a three-tiered hierarchy, constructed upon criteria generally applied to works of an advanced literary nature (cf 3.2.1-3). Categories which approximate user preferences, as exhibited at an early stage of acknowledging the fiction problem (cf 3.1.1.5: 3.2.2), are to be seen in the model used by Carnovsky in 1930 which in essence is very little different from the categories used by Mann (1969-83).

In view of the importance of fiction categorisation to the public library and its implications for the subject of this study, viz that of the relationship between the manifest wants of the users and the perceived needs of users as reflected in official public library objectives, the development of a model to be explored empirically with a view to obtaining information on public library users' observed preferences, is of crucial importance. Thus, in the light of the many approaches to categorisation and their associated terms already discussed, the model to be developed will be based on the one advocated by Mann, as the closest approximation to that used in Cape Town City Library Services. This schema will be used as the basis upon which to construct a model of fiction categories to be tested empirically, viz :

1. Classical fiction : Incorporates the works of classical and contemporary authors, not only determined by acclaim but by more formal inclusion in the companions to literature.
2. Bestseller fiction: Includes all the categories ranging between classical literature and the third category of lighter fiction, but is characterised most typically by the 'bestseller'.
3. Lighter fiction: Comprises the lowest level of fiction, being characterised by the stereotyped-formula novel - which includes romances, crime fiction and the western.

Within the context of the research supposition as outlined in Chapter 1 (cf 1.1), viz that public libraries tend to accord a higher priority to works of acknowledged literary merit than to reading material representing the known wants of their public, this accords with the four models, viz those of Carter and Bonk, Coetzee, Carnovsky and Mann, all of which are based on similar assumptions of literary merit being the overriding criterion.

The models developed by Carter and Bonk and by Coetzee clearly express a partiality for works of high literary and para-literary standard, and although Coetzee makes provision for 'popular or mass-literature' this category caters for only one division of sub-classical literature, thus the division is in effect by literary or non-literary merit (cf 4.1.4). However, Carnovsky and Mann place works of high literary merit in their first categories, with 'bestseller' fiction in the second level. Both also provide a position for the lighter genres of fiction in a third level, which the former typologies exclude.

#### 4.3 THE PUBLIC LIBRARY USER AND LEISURE READING SATISFACTION: Conclusion

The research studies on public library users that have been considered in this chapter, have isolated the basic biographical characteristics of the public library user together with some indication of the interrelated influential factors involved in reading. Finally the question of user reading motives, in relation of the satisfactions that leisure reading has to offer, have been examined and several important attributes discovered.

In general it may be said that reading and public library use is initially determined by the user's educational level. The characteristics isolated found that public library users are likely to have enjoyed a longer formal education, have a vocational training and hold a responsible position. With regard to age, the studies show that the reading public reflected the expansion of education: in the 1930s it was the under 30 age group who read the most, by the 1940s the majority of public library users were found to be 35 and under. It was also found that users are usually married and that more women than men use the public library, but these statistics are also affected by location and whether or not the user is employed. Public library reading choices show a preference for recreational reading, which is categorised by works of fiction. The percentage of the population who are library members is somewhat difficult to accurately assess and depends on such aspects as the age limit for adult membership together with such factors as access to and the distance from the nearest library.

Influential factors in public library readership are extremely diverse and include an obvious availability of books and libraries, which is in turn



qualified by the type of community and location. Essentially better-educated urban dwellers tend to read more than less-educated rural dwellers and the former are better served with libraries. The importance of an early and pleasant introduction to books and reading not only plays a large role in promoting adult reading habits but ideally leads to maturity in reading, a situation where the reader is able to generate his own interests and make intelligent use of the information he thus acquires. In the determination of user reading choices, the user's own motives together with his expectations of satisfaction of his wants are seen to be of vital importance, but again such factors are qualified by the educational advantage of the user. With relation to the more psychological field of user motives, it is also acknowledged that accurate and unbiased data on the subject is extremely difficult to acquire.

Researchers have, furthermore, attempted to follow psychological and sociological directions and theories which have widened the area of knowledge on users studies, with attempts being made to relate reading to socio-economic status and quality of reading to function and category of book. Such public library user studies have provided several useful theories but little concrete evidence to advance the understanding of user leisure reading motives. As already mentioned, this would appear to be related to the inherent difficulties in collecting the necessary data, and to this end it suggested that a radically different approach is needed.

The examination of the characteristics of fiction have indicated that they provide the reader with a special, symbolic and larger-than-life view

of the world, which is also more logical, ideal, safer and exciting. As such the appeal of these characteristics to the reader is generally of an emotional nature.

Thus it may be appreciated that works of fiction have the capability of offering the reader a broad range of satisfactions which are possibly not available to him in real life. Here the categorisation by complexity relates not only to the abilities and experience of the reader but his wants in relation to his available energies. Thus such categorisation offers accommodation of varying wants which range from a profound intellectual satisfaction to a simple vicarious experience.

The manner of such satisfactions that fiction has to offer include not only the achievement of intellectual satisfaction but also the means of respite, of defusion of tension and of the resolution of problems at a safe distance. Essentially the obtaining of respite is achieved by the removing of concern from one area and placing it into a more agreeable situation. The defusion of tension may come from the physical relaxation of reading, but in more complex form, such as drama, the reader enters into a situation where a form of tension is artificially created, and is eventually resolved, at the same time releasing the tensions built up in the reader. The solving of problems is perhaps even more complex and inasmuch as a reader may alleviate his own problems by gaining increased knowledge and insights though reading, it is also possible for the unconscious desires or concerns of the reader to be faced at a distance, safe from guilt or fear, thus helping him not only to objectivity his problems but to make use of the wider experiences of the

author. The entering of the wider world of the author at the same time also enables the reader to experience a different perspective, thereby extending his own horizons.

In general the wide range of fiction writing available to the public library user may provide satisfactions, under the reader's complete control, which encompass simple entertainment to the complex solving of problems. In works of fiction the reader may achieve one of several satisfactions simultaneously, which at best not only provide an agreeable pastime, but provide him with a new perspective of life and a means of personal growth.

Should it be possible to identify readers' immediate position against Maslow's hierarchy of needs, in conjunction with their available physical and emotional energies, then the factors sought for the controlling of reader satisfaction might be completed. Thus it may be seen that the satisfactions gained from fiction reading, although difficult to measure, are very real, personal and of great importance to the reader both as an individual and in relation to his society.

Finally, from the many research studies considered, it has been possible to develop a categorisation for works of fiction which appears to find not only consensus but would be familiar to library staff and many users in the Cape Town City Library Service. This categorisation will be used for the purpose of the empirical study.

4.4. GENERAL SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE SURVEY AND CONCLUSIONS: The development of a research proposition.

The core of the study, from which the research proposition has been drawn, may be considered as the contemporary manifestation of the fiction problem experienced by the Mechanics' Institutes (cf 2.2.1.5) of the early mid-nineteenth century, which remains unresolved.

This problem is defined by Altick as a lack of predetermined limits on the extent to which public libraries should accede to the implicit and explicit demands of the majority of their rate-paying public (cf 2.2.3). From the discussion of the principles of book selection (cf 3.2.1-3), it is evident that confusion still exists in the matter and that the question of quality versus demand (cf 3.2.3) continues to concern library staff in the face of continuing user preference for sub-classical fiction (cf 6.1.3.11).

As a reflection of this, attitudes towards literary fiction appear to enjoy a far greater priority than sub-classical fiction in the literature, particularly in the nineteenth century (cf 2.2.3; 2.3.1.9; 2.4.2).

This position was similar as far as book selection was concerned (cf 3.2.3), where authorities tended to emphasise the characteristics and merits of classical fiction and where all the categories of fiction were being reviewed critically in terms of criteria derived from the assessment of literary fiction. This situation has also remained virtually unchanged since the last century.

While the desire to read for relaxation (i.e. to obtain respite from the toils of work) was an issue of some contention among the Mechanics' Institutes (cf 2.2.1.5), it was a predominant motive behind the establishment of subscription libraries in some factories in the United States, viz that workers might have access to lighter categories of reading for relaxation (cf 2.3.1.5). However, this important aspect of leisure reading appears to have received little if any attention in works on the subject of book selection (cf. 3.2.2).

Although much pioneer research into public library reading was conducted in the 1930s by the Chicago Graduate School of Library Science (cf 4.1.1), which approached the subject, including the 'why' of reading (cf 4.1.2.5), from several different perspectives, relatively little new advances have been made in this field. One possible exception is the work of Peter Mann who considers public library reading significantly more from the vantage point of the sociologist (cf 4.1.4). However, in relation to the limitations in this type of research, Foster (cf 4.1.4) has suggested that new research directions are to be found in other disciplines not traditionally open to librarians, namely those of a more scientific nature. Unhappily it would appear that attention given to public library development generally appears to fall behind that accorded to information provision in science and industry (cf 2.2.4; 2.4.5; 3.1.2).

Two main factors emerge from the literature survey. The first relates to the chronic lack of adequate finance for the public library (cf 2.2.3.2), which in itself may be perceived as reflecting a lack of sufficient importance being accorded to public libraries by community leaders to

warrant a high financial priority. The second concerns the evidence that the fiction problem of the early public library (cf 2.2.3) and its relationship with the setting of objectives continues to influence public library attitudes. It seems possible that these factors are interrelated, both having had their origins in the historical background of the public library when such objectives were determined.

The public library inherited many streams of influence, including religious and academic ones as well as factors such as the reading tastes of the learned society members (cf 2.2.1.3) and the patrons of the circulating libraries (cf 2.2.1.4), all of which have left a lasting impression. But it was the motives of the founders of the public library which finally determined the central objectives of the newly emergent institution in the 19th century.

As Murison states (cf 2.2.3), it was the educated people who not only stocked but conceived the public library in Britain. Likewise, in the United States the founders of public libraries were men of influence and foresight (like Ticknor and his contemporaries), who themselves needed access to books to help them keep abreast of the many new developments and discoveries of the era (cf 2.3.1.6).

But to establish and maintain an institution as costly as a public library required considerable justification for public finance. In Britain in particular, where the issue was debated in Parliament, it was the joint endeavours of the founders, librarians and political and social reformers of the period which provided convincing evidence for the need of public

libraries (cf 2.2.2). Success was achieved by linking the public library to social reform and thus to the social concerns of the time, which related largely to the problem of the newly-urbanised who had drifted from the rural areas (cf 2.2.1; 2.4.4.) or had come from the waves of new immigrants (cf 2.3.1.6). The lack of education among the newly-urbanised was jeopardising the stability of organised society, and it was firmly believed that their meagre levels of formal education could be redressed through the public library (cf 2.2.2.2.; 2.3.1.6; 2.4.4).

However, the two contemporary streams of reading interest in the mid-nineteenth century were represented, on the one hand by the literary and scientific society libraries established by the educated classes, and on the other by the circulating libraries which were designed to provide popular fiction for the less educated. It is apparent that present-day public library objectives are related more to the former movement, while the notion of popularity remains overwhelmingly associated with the latter.

The reality of what the vast majority of users want differs palpably from that reflected in the public library objectives, and hence the perceptions of public librarians of what most users manifestly need. This view was influenced in the past by such external factors as the need to provide justification for the establishment of public libraries; today the educational motive is similarly cited as justification for funding. Thus the problem not only remains unresolved, but, in terms of the library associations who define such objectives, there appears little if any awareness that the potential for conflict still exists.

The obvious deficiency towards the full realisation of the public library's original ideals is discernible not only from generally low membership figures among adults but also from the observation that the majority of readers do not specifically wish to educate themselves in their own leisure time. Such deficiencies contribute to the fact that the public library has failed to earn itself an adequate measure of public respect which would ensure its enhanced financial status in today's competitive social environment in the major English-speaking countries of the West.

The adoption of a stance of firm adherence to the educational objectives of the public library, made partially in an effort to ensure continued public financial support, it is submitted, has had a deleterious effect on its development, thus depriving it of sufficient power both to modify its outmoded objectives and to fulfil a more realistic role. Thus the public library finds itself trapped in a self-perpetuating dilemma of being torn between ideal and reality.

Thus, in the light of the foregoing, it is proposed that public library objectives are in conflict with the expressed demands of its public. This research proposition may be formulated thus :



The predominant attitudes of public library staff towards public library objectives exhibit a higher priority towards the pursuit of educational goals - a preoccupation which appears to be at variance with the leisure-reading demands of a significant proportion of public library users.

It is therefore planned to test this proposition in an effort to determine public library users' leisure-reading preferences (in their turn viewed as a reflection of their motives or purposes) and to correlate these with the attitudes of public library staff to users' needs in conjunction with the stated objectives of the public library (cf 3.1.2).

Emphasis will be placed, first, upon the determination of the purpose for which users read in their leisure time, and second on their reasons for preferring leisure reading and, finally, on an assessment of these purposes and reasons (to be taken as a reflection of their underlying motives and an expression of their prominent preference for fiction authors.

From the point of view of the public library, it is hoped to compare these findings with the responses of staff members and establish not only their attitudes towards public library objectives, but to the recreational or leisure reading wants and satisfaction of their users.

It is hoped that it will be possible to discover from the data obtained, some indication of the manner in which users read in their leisure time, and as to whether their reading preferences fall into any particular reading pattern.

The frequent assertions in the literature, regarding the benefits of good fiction (cf 3.2.4), are seen not only as a desire on the part of the public library to provide further education for users, but also of providing the maximum reading satisfaction (cf 2.2.3; 2.2.1.9; 2.3.2; 2.4.2; 4.2.4).

Thus it is proposed to test these attitudes by considering, if possible, the reading patterns of the different educational groups in the hopes of discovering whether those with the greatest educational attainment actually seek their leisure reading satisfaction in classical fiction, and conversely whether the lowest educational groups are limited to the lighter categories of fiction. Should this not be the case then it must be assumed that educational attainment does not necessarily determine fiction reading satisfactions, but that the answers must be found elsewhere.

The fuller examination of the above concept would necessitate research extended beyond the scope of the proposition outlined earlier.



## CHAPTER 5 METHODOLOGY OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

To conduct systematic observations in the practical environment of public libraries it is necessary to assess an operational situation by empirical means, i.e. by experiment or experience, as opposed to mere theoretical assumptions. The standard method of empirical investigation of theoretical assumptions is the collection of information or data on the subject. In this instance the mode of data-gathering was by the application of the survey method.

This method is widely acknowledged as a means of obtaining valuable information on given sociologically operational conditions. In particular it offers the flexibility of adaptation and application to a wide range of varying circumstances, and some notable examples of this successful application of the survey method employed during the past century have been obtained and utilised (cf Chapters 2, 3 & 4). Like all methods of systematic enquiry a survey of this kind requires careful planning and design. These aspects will be considered in greater detail later in this chapter. Apart from such considerations, it goes without saying that the willing cooperation of library and public alike are essential prerequisites for its successful execution.

Planning implies that decisions on important aspects, such as the nature of the population, or universe, to be surveyed; its size and location; appropriate sampling methods; and the design of the questionnaires, need

to be taken. This, in turn, requires pre-testing, the distribution and collection of completed questionnaires, and the processing of the data obtained.

In this instance it was necessary to construct two surveys, viz (a) to ascertain the needs and characteristics of public library users in terms of their leisure-reading preferences, and (b) to complement the first enquiry by determining the attitudes of the public library staff towards public library leisure reading. These surveys are seen as a mere initial step towards determining comprehensively the attitudes of the public library to leisure reading.

With this objective in view, the methodology of the proposed surveys and the manner in which they may be used effectively to obtain the desired information will be outlined and discussed. This is in order to test the primary research proposition as developed from the literature survey in Chapter 4 (cf 4.4), and the research questions as discussed in Chapter 1 (cf 1.1).

## 5.2 GENERAL SURVEY CHARACTERISTICS

The general acceptance of the survey method as a valid means of scientific research may be considered as evident, not only from its continued application, but (perhaps more significantly) from its status as an instrument inseparably linked to current user studies and social research itself (Line, 1967 : 10). The survey method offers a particularly versatile means of studying the object of research or unit of analysis, by

the collection of information concerning such objects or units (Babbie, 1973 : 58-60). These may then be subjected to processes of manipulation in an attempt to find or establish causal relationships between the variables under research (Busha, 1980 : 9-13).

As Line has attested, the survey method has the ability to provide a systematic means of data collection when applied in a social setting (Line, 1967 : 30). This is usually effected with the aid of various types of interview or questionnaire, used separately or in combination (Glock 1967 : 67). It is also the means of obtaining accurate data on the relationship between two or more elements, as compared to data impressions formed by casual observation (Blalock, 1979 : 59). It further provides the means of obtaining a smaller but essentially representative picture of the whole population or universe under review (Glock, 1967 : 67; Line, 1982 : 12).

Generally, surveys may be divided into two main groups, viz those yielding facts, such as statistics, and those obtaining opinions on and attitudes to aspects of social activities, such as those applying to library service. The common denominator of both types is that of measurement, which also requires suitable comparison, to be effective (Line, 1982 : 13-14). Although surveys are usually classified as being either descriptive or analytical, the ideal survey combines the best of both. Not only do they enumerate the data: they also provide analyses which attempt to establish and interpret the causal relations between the various data units (Line, 1982 : 15; Parten, 1950 : 98).

### 5.2.1 PLANNING OF THE SURVEY

The choice of the location of the survey was determined mainly by the need to obtain an appropriate sample of the library service's public. To this end it was conducted at Wynberg Public Library. This branch is the second largest of 37 service units in the Cape Town municipal area, and serves a wide area in the southern suburbs of the city. The region includes both commercial and a range of types of residential areas, which, it was felt, presented the best available choice for a heterogeneous sample of the many citizens who are members of the Cape Town City Library Service, and whose resultant statistical data as derived from the proposed survey could lend itself to comparison with the official annual statistics of the service.

The registered users of Wynberg Public Library represent about 12% of the total number of adult library members of Cape Town City Libraries which, in turn, had a membership representing approximately 45% of the city's juvenile and adult population, based on the statistics available at the time of the survey (Cape Town City Library Service, 1979 : 15).

The survey took place at Wynberg Public Library during one day, the day chosen being a mid-week Wednesday, which is as near typical as possible of a normal library working day. The library was open from 10 am to 7 pm in the evening at the time the survey was conducted, which enabled the researcher to accommodate in her sample as wide a proportion of the target population as possible, encompassing a range of users from the early shopper to the home-going office worker. This mid-week day was also

unrelated to the heavier borrowing, and subsequent returning, of books read during the weekend.

The choice of public library staff, as a target population for the second survey, required a rather different approach. In this instance there was less need to find a representative sample but rather to ensure that the variable of experience and responsibility in book selection and public library user work could be investigated adequately. Here the chosen sample involved staff from both Head office and most of the Service's branches.

#### 5.2.2 SAMPLING

In theory the success of a survey tends to depend upon the basis of the sample achieved, which, because it attempts to study human action, is subject to forms of bias stemming from both researcher and respondents (Babbie, 1973 : 83).

Such random sampling attempts to provide every participant, (i e the library users in this case) with an equal and independent chance of participation in the survey. But in this instance, in view of the time limitations, an approximate and quasi-random sample was attempted. This was achieved by approaching the first respondent randomly, then every " th " subsequent respondent (Line, 1967 : 26-27).



This sampling was achieved by taking into consideration the time required to fill in the user questionnaire (cf Appendix 1) and was thus set at every fifth user.

In terms of the librarians' survey because experience rather than any form of representativeness was required (cf 5.2.1), a finite, systematic and deliberate selection was made (Babbie, 1973 : 92; Line, 1967 : 25-26). The sample included members of book selection committee, both permanent and rotating. Branch staff participate in book selection to choose books for their own libraries assisting at the same time towards the overall development of the Service's bookstock in relation to the Service's objectives (cf 4.2.4.) and the projected future users' needs.

In conjunction with decisions relating to the sample selection and size and the limiting factors of time and staff, Busha suggests that the more homogeneous the sample the smaller it may be in relative terms. Conversely, the more heterogeneous the sample, the relatively larger it should be (Busha, 1980 : 59).

Other limitations are the degree of accuracy attainable, in relation to this important factor. Line suggests approximate figures based on a population sample of a minimum of 20 000. This is considered to provide an accuracy of value, in relation to the total population from which the sample was drawn, of one percent. A sample of 3 000 would provide an accuracy value of roughly 2,5 percent. In the case of a smaller scale (eg a sample of 500) would provide an accuracy value of about 6 percent. However, in determining the sample size it is of equal importance to take

into account the influence of the other factors involved, such as time, cost, staff and the method of collection (cf 5.2.3). Available evidence suggests that 10 interviewers, working intensively every evening over a five-day period, and using a tightly structured, short interview, which differs little from a questionnaire, could only hope to reach about 150 interviewees (Line, 1967 : 30, 44, 61, 65).

Apart from such limitations, the situation was complicated further by the realisation that it would be impossible to reach an adequate random sample either of the total service or the user population of the library chosen. As the researcher was unable to visit more branches for any lengthy period with a view to conducting a postal survey or expecting the branch staff to collect the necessary data, the opportunity of spending one working day in one large relatively heterogeneous library environment, suggested that a feasible decision needed to be taken. To this end Wynberg Public Library (cf 5.2.1) appeared to offer a good approximation of representativeness among public library users, and it was decided to attempt to reach a sample of 100 respondents. This goal was accomplished just before closing time on the chosen day.

The only limitations laid down for respondents were the criteria that they held adult library cards (ie that they were eighteen years or older), not only to ensure that they were registered Cape Town City Library Service users (cf 4.1.2.1), but also that fiction-reading of a juvenile nature would not be included, and that the respondents' main purpose for coming to visit the Library was to borrow books for themselves (Line, 1967 : 26, 46; Busha, 1980 : 60).

It should be acknowledged quite unequivocally, however, that the sample was neither random nor representative, but 'that it was used only for the purpose of developing further' the broad research proposition derived from the literature survey (cf 4.4).

As it was known that not only were there many school children studying in the Library, but that many parents entered the Library to bring and later collect small children from story hour sessions in the Children's Library, it was realised that there had to be a very realistic approach to the problem of collecting useful data. In practice, the limitation of the survey to those borrowing for personal reading was found very necessary. While members of the public often visit libraries to read the newspapers or borrow records, it was felt that a wife who borrowed books for her husband only could not be expected to answer for him. Therefore, limitations were exercised so that the data gathered bore a direct relationship to the annual user and issue statistics of the Library (cf 5.2.1; 6.1.3.11). The only actual refusals encountered during the survey were for reasons of insufficient time.

One modest, but necessary, limitation was laid down for the librarians survey (cf 5.2.1); this demanded that those participating should have had not only branch and book selection experience, but also should have held some recognised form of professional qualification in librarianship. Of the staff members at the approximately 37 branches and Head Office who qualified under these limitations, including librarians-in-charge of branches and general members of Head office Book Selection Committee, 41

were invited to participate, and of the questionnaires distributed, 38 were completed.

### 5.2.3 SURVEY METHODS

In order to collect data, the researcher had a wide choice of data-collecting instruments at her disposal, the principal methods of which may be considered to encompass personal interviewees telephone communication, questionnaires, checklists, and postal or delivery communications (McDiarmid, 1940 : 8-9; Parten, 1950 : 331). As the basic purpose of such methods are to attempt to collect specific data from the public, the choice of the most appropriate instrument of collection is essential (Line, 1982 : 52).

Two very frequently employed methods are the questionnaire and the interview. Both are used to collect information not otherwise obtainable. The former is usually posted or delivered to a selected sample, and has generally proved to be a very satisfactory instrument, although it tends to yield a poor rate of return. The latter method facilitates a greater flexibility but tends to create the greater danger of bias. However, if the interviewer adheres rigidly to a tightly-structured interview schedule, this method has definite advantages over the posted or delivered questionnaire technique by providing a higher response rate, with fewer possibilities for misunderstandings. Although both methods occupy an important position in social-science research, both have limitations. Perhaps there is not a great deal of difference in relative effectiveness of the two in their simpler forms. While there are various means of data

collection at the researcher's disposal, a combination of methods can often overcome some of the inherent defects in any one method (Line, 1967 : 44-45, 60-67).

Bearing in mind the deficiencies of both the questionnaire and the interview, as well as the limited time at the disposal of the researcher, it was decided that a combination of both methods for the users' survey, and the questionnaire alone for the librarians' survey, offered the best possibility of obtaining the desired data and completion rate (cf 5.2.7).

In this instance it was possible and desirable, in the interests of the completion rate (cf 5.2.3; 5.2.7), that the users' survey questionnaire was administered personally to respondents. The librarians' survey questionnaire was in the main sent by the internal delivery service of Cape Town City Library Service. While this method of survey questionnaire delivery provides particular advantages to respondents (e g it provides more time to read and reflect on the questions and provides the benefit of assured anonymity to encourage frank and open responses), it also increases the risk of affecting the rate of collection (cf 5.2.7) (Eckhardt, 1977, : 240; Line, 1967, 45-61).

#### 5.2.4 DISTRIBUTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaires require careful planning, not only as to the mode of delivery or despatch, but due consideration should be given to the day of the month or the season, so as to obtain the best possible response (Parten, 1950 : 380-92) (cf 5.2.1). Ideally questionnaires should be

distributed on the same day, the rationale behind this suggesting that a time lapse may affect responses and, further, that if the contents are discussed between participants unintentional collusion may occur (Line, 1982 : 69).

The time chosen was during the winter months when there was less competition with the recreational pursuits of summer. As the users' survey was conducted personally in the Library, the distribution adhered to the sampling procedures discussed earlier (cf 5.2.3).

A total of 101 questionnaires were distributed in the Library, the extra one relating to a lady who had come to collect her child (cf 5.2.3). As this response yielded no usable data it was disregarded.

The librarians' survey questionnaire was delivered either personally or by the service's weekly delivery van. All staff were asked to return the questionnaire as soon as possible, preferably by the next delivery of the following week. The questionnaires were delivered in sealed envelopes and addressed personally to each participating staff member.

In this instance 41 questionnaires were sent to library staff, all of whom had prior notice of the impending survey and had expressed their willingness to take part.

### 5.2.5 QUESTIONNAIRE CONSTRUCTION

Following the decisions upon the target population and the size and nature of the sample, the design and construction is of equal importance in the successful execution of the survey.

Questionnaire construction, as a means of obtaining the desired information, requires careful framing and arranging of the questions (Moser, 1971 : 45). Also, as it is a means of communication with the respondent, the initial impact is of a visual nature and it is important that it should create a favourable impression (Parten, 1950 : 161).

To this end the questionnaire should set be out clearly and sensibly, and preferably printed on one side, to facilitate handling. Instruction should be easily understood and adequate space should be provided for the later coding (Line, 1982 : 66-67).

The question content should be relevant, simple, unambiguous and well balanced, and also carefully positioned. Question sequence should lead from the general to the more specific, in a consistent and logical manner (Busha, 1980 : 72-73), with the more interesting questions placed towards the centre to elicit maximum concentration (Babbie, 1973 : 150; Parten, 1950 : 213).

A list for checking data is useful in that it serves to remind the respondent of things he/she may have momentarily forgotten. It is also

considered to elicit a reasonably 'natural' response (Parten, 1950 : 186-7).

Ideally a questionnaire should include basic biographical questions, which invariably provide interesting data, such as those related to age, sex, marital status and occupation. More subtle questions normally require more than single probings to be effective and to produce more comprehensive results (Line, 1967 : 48, 50, 60). The categories used for the question relating to user occupation were adapted from those used by Parten, for the purpose of relating them to a given South African situation (cf Parten, 1960 : 456-7).

In the questionnaire the biographical questions were listed on the final page and covered not only the characteristics cited above, but very importantly those isolated by research studies on public library users, as discussed in the literature survey (cf 4.1.2), together with influential factors which serve to distinguish public library users. These included the characteristics of the age of public library users, their marital status and sex, together with their educational attainment levels and some indication of their occupational status. This question was further amplified to enquire whether the user's occupation was of a full-time nature or not.

The main interest was focussed on the questions which reflected users' preferences and motives for their leisure-time reading, and the many questions employed were derived from the literature in general and the literature survey in particular. Consequent upon the difficulties



encountered in obtaining accurate user reading preferences (cf 4.2.1.5), one question was repeated three times in differing forms, relating first to typical public library genres of fiction (Question 4), second to users' preferred form of leisure reading (Question 8) and finally to a checking device, comprising a list of well-known authors (Question 11). In regard to the latter, respondents were invited to indicate which of the listed authors names they would use to select appropriate leisure-reading titles at the time of the interview. Question 3 also included several similar questions, which were combined for statistical purposes. In Question 12.2 respondents were asked to indicate their level of educational attainment within a wide range of options.

Prepared responses to questions may be constructed in several different ways, depending generally on the strength or depth of answer required. The respondent might be asked to scale his answers which range from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" (Babbie, 1973 : 140-41), or merely to place a tick in a box, to answer a precoded question or to give a free answer in an open-ended question (Line, 1982 : 58-59). However, it is necessary, when using such multiple-choice questions, to ensure that the responses provided should cover all shades of opinion. The questionnaire usually includes the provision of an "other (please specify)" category to cater for unanticipated personal answers (Babbie, 1973 : 141).

To afford better control and avoid any possibility of duplication, it is recommended that questionnaires should bear individual coding numbers (Line, 1982 : 70). Such a method of coding was particularly useful, especially in determining whether all questionnaires had been received or

in identifying a particular number in order to check its contents. Each questionnaire was given a four-digit number, i e 0001 to 0100 for the users' survey, and with the addition of the prefix L, i e L 0001 - L 0041, for the librarians' survey, which in practice was found to be quite satisfactory.

#### 5.2.6 PRE-TESTING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Pre-testing of the questionnaire involves the practical application of some or all of the questions together with the overall design of the questionnaire. This is particularly important before time and money is spent on printing and distribution. Such a test provides an indispensable means of checking on the efficiency and basic construction of the questionnaire and the opportunity of solving any problems that may arise (Babbie, 1973 : 205-6).

Such testing is usually carried out on a small random or selected group, which affords the researcher some indication of the responses he may expect, thus permitting him to prune or clarify questions when required, and, on the whole, to streamline procedures (Line, 1982 : 67-68).

Although Line considers pre-testing as a 'counsel of perfection' such testing was found to be absolutely necessary in practice. The questionnaires went through at least three drafts, with the aid and advice of willing friends, neighbours and colleagues, and in general was subject to a measure of simplification and partial redesigning.

### 5.2.7 QUESTIONNAIRE COLLECTION AND COMPLETION RATE

If more than one person is involved in the collection of the data, close cooperation is especially necessary, for whilst the opportunity exists for increased precision, the possibility of distortion increases conversely. Great care must, therefore, be exercised to ensure that biases do not develop between the expectations of the researcher or assistant, and the wish of the respondent to reply in a favourable light. As Line comments, the distribution of questionnaires is one thing, but their completion and return a different matter (Line, 1982 : 49, 69-71).

From experience mailed questionnaires, sent to a largely unknown or unprepared public, are found to yield a low rate of response (often only one-fifth of the total). However, the use of follow-up letters, or other forms of reminder, including telephone calls, are of some help, possibly securing half the initial response again (Line, 1982 : 69; Parten, 1950 : 392).

The type of response which may be expected varies in relation to the manner of collection. In a closed area, such as a school or library where questionnaires are usually handed out to the public as they enter and collected as they depart, a response rate of 80% is considered good. For postal questionnaires, a response rate of 60% is satisfactory (Parten, 1950 : 392, 434).

The user survey was conducted in an enclosed area of the Wynberg Public Library. A response rate of 100% was achieved with the assistance of

library staff. The semi-combination of questionnaire and interview was found to work very well in practice. It was greatly appreciated that suitable chairs and tables were provided, as those in the reading area were too low for the convenience of respondents and was full for most of the time. The Librarian-in-charge of Wynberg Public Library was able to put at least two staff members at the disposal of the researcher for most of the time: one to invite users on a random basis to participate, and the other to facilitate the completion of the questionnaires.

The respondent and the researcher or the staff assistant sat down opposite each other at the tables provided, and while the staff member was carefully reading out the questions from her own questionnaire, the respondent filled in his/her answers on another copy. All the staff members concerned exercised the greatest care not to influence the answers of the respondents in any way. Only in the case of the list of authors at Question 11 (cf 5.2.5), were the respondents specifically and consistently requested to tick those authors that they would choose from 'at the present time', in an attempt to avoid their citing the many books (particularly by well-known classical authors, read in childhood) which did not relate to their current reading choices and which created a potential situation for bias.

This list of authors (Question 11) was constructed by the researcher in close collaboration with the staff members of several branch libraries and more especially with the chief fiction reviewer of Cape Town City Libraries. She not only checked and added names to the list, but categorised them in line with common public library usage in the service,

which correlated in all respects with the model developed in chapter 4 (cf 4.2.4). The only difference between the Service categorisation and other models was that in unofficial public library terminology the three categories of fiction are referred to as A, B and C fiction, which correspond to the categories classical fiction, bestseller fiction and lighter fiction respectively (cf 4.2.4). viz

- A fiction : Comprising works by classical and contemporary literary authors of the highest literary merit.
- B fiction : Characterised by the 'bestseller' novel, but includes works ranging between B and A fiction and from B to C fiction.
- C fiction : Including the more stereotyped formula novels of 'romance', 'who-dun-it crime', the 'western' and science fiction, but omits the even lighter ranges which are exemplified by Mills and Boon or Harlequin.

Where authority was required to determine a category of more literary fiction, the reviewer had recourse to various companions to literature and in-house reviewing catalogues. Additional authors' names, provided by respondents in the questionnaire were classified in a similar manner. Where an author was found to publish in more than one category, he was categorised in the area in which he is best known.

The rate of return of the librarians' questionnaire was also satisfactory: of the 41 persons to whom the questionnaires were sent, 38 responded. The three non-responses were found to relate to staff who had changed their jobs during the survey period. Several were slow in returning their questionnaires, but a telephone call to the staff member concerned was successful. One staff member lost her questionnaire, and a duplicate was despatched. The actual answering of the questions was also satisfactory:

while some questions were missed and some not fully answered, it was usually obvious that the response given to the questions had been considered relevant by the respondents. In only one instance were the responses from staff members (from nearby libraries) found to be almost identical, but it was decided none the less to accept these replies at face value.

### 5.3 PROCESSING OF THE DATA

The first stage of the data processing involves the editing of the material collected. This covers the primary preparation of checking for completeness of the questionnaires and the accuracy and uniformity of the responses (Parten, 1950 : 343; Moser, 1971 : 411).

The main task involves reducing the mass of raw data to manageable and manipulatable proportions, so that the central information emerges clearly from the rest of the material. Finally, the information is tabulated in a form from which the desired information may be more easily extracted (Moser, 1971 : 410; Line, 1982 : 79).

Although more sophisticated methods exist, small surveys are usually tabulated by hand (Moser, 1971 : 410). The information reduced thus may now be rendered into a simple tabulated form and percentages calculated to facilitate comparison with other figures (Line, 1982 : 90). The information is usually then transferred to some form of work sheet, in preparation for the next task - that of analysis of the data (McDiarmid, 1940 : 185).

For both questionnaires, the data received were edited, reduced, tabulated on to graph paper and percentages calculated where necessary. The information was then transferred on to a blank copy of each of the questionnaires for easy reference and comparison for the purpose of analysis (cf Appendix 1 & Appendix 2).

In an attempt to avoid bias in the responses to some of the questions in the librarians' survey, (where extremes of choice are often avoided by respondents) the sum of the first two choices was taken as signifying a closer estimation of the majority choice, and used where cited (Line, 1982 : 62-63).





## CHAPTER 6 : ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the data collected from the public library users' survey (cf Appendix 1) and the librarians' survey (cf Appendix 2), as discussed in the previous chapter, will be examined and interpreted more closely. This will be done by considering the data thus achieved together with the responses to each question in turn.

What needs to be borne in mind is that the problem centres on the public library user and his leisure reading wants, as related to the attitudes of public library staff members and eventually to the development of the bookstock. Hence the attitudes of public library staff as shaped by public library objectives need to be contrasted with those of library users unaffected by such considerations. Further, that some clear indication of the nature of users' leisure reading wants is also central to such an argument, and information on this important aspect will be sought from the responses provided by the users themselves.

In spite of the pre-testing of both questionnaires (cf 5.2.6), it must be conceded that several aspects may well have been improved upon in retrospect. This applies in particular to the incomplete list of relevant authors (cf 6.1.3.11) cited in the users' questionnaire - to which the respondents themselves added appropriate names. Likewise, the provision

of only ten options was found to be unduly restrictive during the execution of the survey, consequently necessitating further deliberation between the researcher and the respondent. It was attempted to redress this difficulty by requesting all respondents to mark the name of any author they would choose to read at the time (cf 5.2.5)

In line with the user studies discussed in Chapter 4 (cf 4.1.2.1), the characteristics of public library users as found in the user survey (cf Appendix 1) will also be compared with the data found in the literature survey, to assess the relevance of the characteristics of users at Wynberg Public Library to those of the United States and Great Britain. However, in relation to the influential factors also discussed in Chapter 4, it must be appreciated that as these factors are influential in encouraging members of society to become not only book readers, but also users of the public library, it may therefore be assumed that such influences have been exerted upon the user respondents already.

From the point of view of the librarians' survey - again, with the wisdom of hindsight - it now seems that many of the questions asked were perhaps a little too ambitious: the same conclusions might well have been drawn with equal authority on the basis of slightly fewer questions.

It should be acknowledged that staff members not only took great pains to complete their questionnaires, but gave the questions much thought and showed considerable interest, which was greatly appreciated.

### 6.1.1 USERS' SURVEY : Biographical Data (cf Question 12)

For the reasons discussed in the previous chapter (cf 5.2.5), the more straightforward questions were placed either at the beginning or at the end of the questionnaire and the more important questions sandwiched in between. In this instance, the questions pertaining to personal characteristics of the individual user (4.1.2; 5.2.5), appeared on the final page (viz Biographical data).

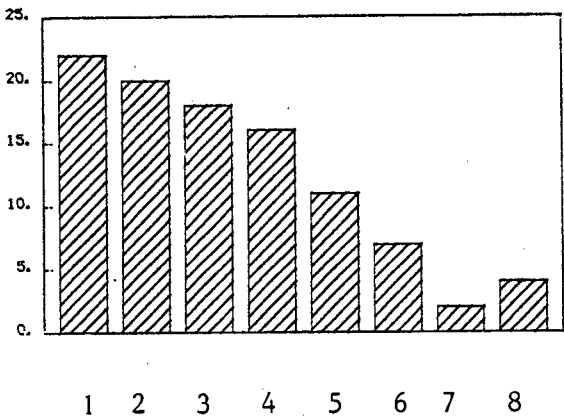
#### 6.1.1.12.1 - Age Group (cf Question 12.1)

It was ascertained that the age group featuring marginally higher in the survey was that in the category 30 - 39 years of age (viz 22% of the sample), but in general it appears to be the 30 to 49 age group, followed by the 60 to 69 group which uses the public library more. The age distribution was as follows:

30 - 39 years of age	-	22%
40 - 49 years	"	20%
60 - 69 years	"	18%
20 - 29 years	"	16%
70 years of age and over	-	11%
50 - 59 years of age	-	7%
18 - 19 years	"	2%
No response	-	4%

(cf Graph 6.1.1.12.1)

GRAPH  
6.1.1.12.1 Age Groups (in percentages)



1.	30 - 39 years of age	-	22%
2.	40 - 49 "	-	20%
3.	60 - 69 "	-	18%
4.	20 - 29 "	-	16%
5.	70 years of age and over	-	11%
6.	50 - 59 years of age	-	7%
7.	18 - 19 "	-	2%
8.	No response	-	4%

6.1.1.12.2 - Educational qualifications (cf Question 12.2)

A wide range of educational levels was provided, which lent itself to subgrouping for statistical purposes (cf 5.2.5):

Standards 6 & 7	-	2%	
Standards 8 & 9	-	16%	
=			<u>Pre-matriculation standards</u> - 18%
<u>Matriculation or equivalent</u>			- 48%
Diploma (post-matriculation)			- 18%
Bachelors' degree	-	10%	
Postgraduate degree or diploma	-	6%	
=			<u>Graduate</u> - 16%

(cf Graph 6.1.1.12.2.)

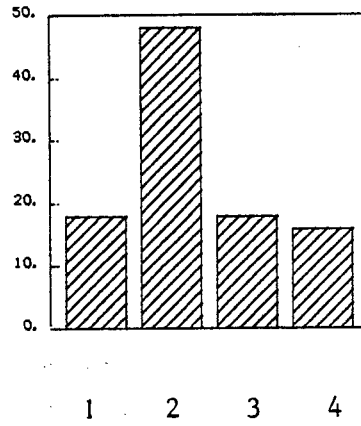
6.1.1.12.3 - Marital status

Married	-	68%
Single	-	20%
Other	-	12%

('Other' was here given as a polite form encompassing either widower/ed or divorced persons).

## GRAPH

## 6.1.1.12.4 Educational qualifications (in percentages)



Standards 6 & 7 - 2%

Standards 8 & 9 - 16%

1. = Pre-Matriculation standards - 18%

2. Matriculation or equivalent - 48%

3. Diploma (post-matriculation) - 18%

Bachelor's degree - 10%

Postgraduate degree or  
diploma - 6%

4. = Graduate - 16%

6.1.1.12.4 - Sex (cf Question 12.4)

Female - 66%

Male - 34%

Comment: As might be expected during a predominantly day-time survey, the majority of respondents were women.

6.1.1.12.5 - Occupational status (cf Question 12.5)

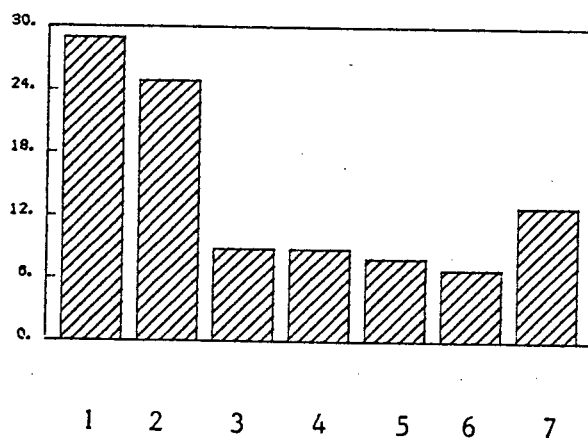
The classifications were based very loosely on those used by Parten, (and similar to those used by Gray & Monroe, 1930 and Berelson 1949) but adapted for the purpose of the South African situation (cf 5.2.5). Whether actually employed or not (ie a question not asked specifically), respondents classified themselves as

Professional staff	-	29% (ie doctors, lawyers and other graduate occupations)
Housewives	-	25%
Wage earners	-	9% (ie blue-collar workers or artisans)
White-collar workers	-	9% (ie clerical employees)
Managerial staff	-	8%
Students	-	7%
Other	-	13%

Comment: The 'other' categories included a wide range of occupations which ranged from those of secretarial assistants to cosmetic consultants (cf Graph 6.1.1.12.5).

## GRAPH

## 6.1.1.12.5 Occupational status (in percentages)



1.	Professionals eg doctors, lawyers and other graduate occupations	-	29%
2.	Housewives	-	25%
3.	Wage earners eg blue-collar workers	-	9%
4.	White-collar workers eg clerical employees	-	9%
5.	Managerial staff	-	8%
6.	Students	-	7%
7.	Other	-	13%



As to the employment status of respondents, it was found that -

59%	were employed full-time
21%	were retired
17%	were employed on a part-time basis
3%	were of retirement age but were employed

#### 6.1.1.12.1 - 12.5

To summarise, the foregoing responses recorded in Tables 6.1.1.12.1 - 12.1 - 12.5 provide a composite picture illustrating at a glance that of the library users interviewed the age groups which made the greatest use of the library were the 30 - 39 and 40 - 49 (20% and 22% respectively), the predominant level of educational attainment was that of matriculation (i.e. a minimum of twelve years of formal education in South Africa) or more advanced. The largest group in full-time employment considered themselves to be of professional standing. Furthermore, respondents were predominantly female and were married, but only about half of the number of women reported that they were housewives.

#### 6.1.2 USER SURVEY : Borrower habits

As discussed earlier (cf 5.2.5), the first questions of the user survey were phrased in deliberately simple language, being designed to establish basic information on user behaviour, such as frequency and purpose of public library use.

6.1.2.1 - Question: How often do you visit the public library? (cf Question 1).

This question was concerned with the frequency and intensity of public library use, and it was found that although the largest single category (42%) normally visited the public library once every three weeks, a combined majority \*(52%) usually came at least once a fortnight. In descending order, the following frequency pattern emerged:

42% visited the library once every three weeks

33% visited the library once a fortnight

12% came twice a week

6% visited the library once a week

3% came once a month

1% came daily

\* Totalling 52%

Comment: The visiting frequency of two percent of respondents was at longer intervals, while one percent did not respond.

6.1.2.2 - Question: For what purpose do you usually take out public library books? (cf Question 2).

The set of questions provided correlated roughly with the L A 1971 public library objectives (cf 3.1.2), however, the term 'culture' was considered to be an unacceptable term to many readers, who, it was felt would not consider such a concept in its more aesthetic or ideal aspect, but rather from the point of view of class consciousness. Therefore an alternative was devised, which would suitably approximate this particular objective to most users, in this instance suggesting that the entry into the world of

good works of art, music or books, would be considered as improving the mind.

Responses were as follows:

For leisure	- 52,3%
To find information	- 25,5%
To broaden my mind	- 16,6%
To further my formal education	- 5,3%

No other reasons were given. (cf Graph 6.1.2.2).

6.1.2.3 - Question: Leisure reading - (ie reading in your own free time, not related to work or formal study): Do you read public library books for any of the following reasons?(see below)(cf Question 3).

The question was designed specifically to elicit responses relating to leisure or recreational reading and provided some eight suggestions, based on ideas gleaned from the professional literature. In making use of those questions which were found to occur frequently, it was obvious that while amplifying the original notion (cf 5.2.5), some questions, in effect, were merely repetitious. Therefore to achieve a greater clarification of the findings and ease of statistical analysis, some amalgamation into subgroupings was considered desirable.

An easy and inexpensive form of entertainment: 10,1%

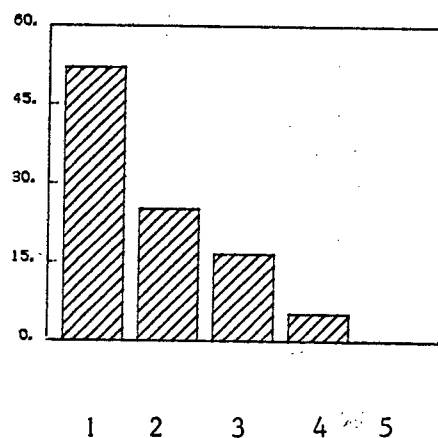
To pass the time pleasantly: 20,3%

= To provide pleasure: - 30,4%

To help relax tensions: 8,6%

## GRAPH

6.1.2.2 For what purpose do you usually take out public library books? (in percentages)



1.	For leisure	-	52,3%
2.	To find information	-	25,5%
3.	To broaden my mind	-	16,6%
4.	To further my formal education	-	5,3%
5.	Other reasons	-	nil

To help get to sleep:	8,3%
To get away from daily pressures:	8,3%
= <u>To defuse tensions:</u>	- 25,2%
To increase general awareness	- 16,2%
As an interesting hobby	- 15,4%
To keep up with new authors and titles	- 10,9%

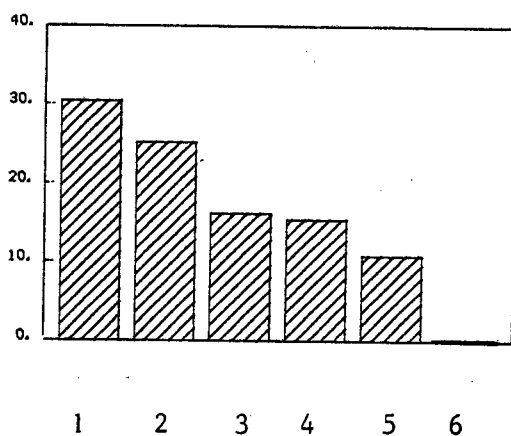
Other reasons (1,59%) suggested the desire for the fulfillment of a variety of needs such as reading at mealtimes and to satisfy the demands of being 'compulsive readers' (cf Graph 6.1.2.3).

6.1.2.4 - Question: Leisure-reading categories: Please indicate from which of the following categories you would usually choose (cf Question 4).

To obtain some indication of what users usually read, and to establish whether their habitual choices of leisure reading exhibited any width and range - i.e. reading in more than one category at the time of the investigation - several categories of choice were provided, which related to the unofficial terminology used in Cape Town City Library Service (cf 4.2.3). Bearing in mind the difficulties experienced by research studies in obtaining accurate data on user reading choices (cf 4.1.2.5), this question was repeated in Question 8 (cf 6.1.2.8) in which an open question for 'favourite type of leisure reading' was given. It was also repeated again in Question 11 (cf 6.1.3.11), in which a wide range of reasonably well-known authors' names was presented as a means of gaining a more accurate indication of what was being read by respondents, thus providing a means of cross-checking in relation to Questions 4 and 8 (cf 5.2.5). Question 4 was intended to elicit responses in accordance with the three main categories of fiction reading, as defined in Chapter 4 (cf 4.2.4;

## GRAPH

6.1.2.3 Do you read public library books for any of the following reasons? (in percentages)



An easy and inexpensive  
form of entertainment - 10,1%

To pass the time  
pleasantly - 20,3%

= 1      To provide pleasure      - 30,4%

To help relax tensions- 8,6%

To get to sleep - 8,3%

To help get away from  
daily pressures - 8,3%

= 2      To defuse tensions      - 25,2%

3. To increase general awareness - 16,2%

4. As an interesting hobby - 15,4%

5. To keep up with new authors  
and titles - 10,9%

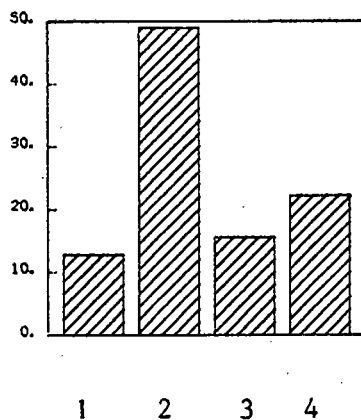
6 Other reasons - nil

5.2.7). 4.1. Classical literature and 4.1.1 Contemporary literary novels, formed the category of Classical fiction (A fiction); 4.2. to 4.3.4. formed the Bestseller fiction category (B fiction) and 4.3.5. to 4.3.8 formed the category of Lighter fiction (C fiction (cf 6.1.2.6: 6,1.3). The terms used are in agreement with those developed in the literature survey (cf 4.2.4), and are also an approximation of the general terminology employed in the branches of Cape Town City Library Service. The three categories are also more familiarly alluded to by the alphabetical designations, thus they may be expected to be reasonably familiar to respondents.

It should be mentioned in passing that in the questionnaire (item no 4.3.7) 'war' was included which is given as a Lighter fiction genre, however novels on the subject of war are far more in keeping with the bestseller category, and should rather have been transposed with 'who-dun-it' (item no 4.3.1), which is a typical genre of the lighter fiction category (cf 4.2.4). The following percentages were obtained after the transposition of the relevant percentages.

<u>Bestseller fiction</u>	49%
<u>Lighter fiction</u>	15,6%
	= (sub-classical fiction-64,6%)
<u>Classical fiction</u>	12,8%
<u>Other</u>	22,4%

## GRAPHS

6.1.2.4 Leisure-time categories (in percentages)

1. Classical fiction (cf 4.1-4.11) - 12,8%

2. Bestseller fiction (cf 4.2-4.3.4) - 48%

3. Lighter fiction (cf 4.3.5-4.3.8) - 15,6%

= Sub-classical fiction 64,6%

4. Other - 22,4%



The responses to the 'Other' question did not relate to fiction reading categories, but to a wide range of subject interests which ranged from art to sport.

6.1.2.5. - Question: How do you usually hear about the books you want to read? (cf Question 5).

To establish the lengths to which users were prepared to go to obtain books, they were asked in Question 5 to report on the manner in which they usually heard about the books they wished to read. Here it emerged that word-of-mouth sources (e g talking to friends) exercised considerable influence, providing a response rate of 23%. This was followed in order of emphasis by other means of advice or guidance:

Talk to friends	23%
Read book reviews in the local newspapers	18,7%
Usually find on the public library shelves by chance	18,3%
Check what other people return to the public library	9,7%
Notice what is on the reservation shelf at your local public library	8,9%
Check the new book lists at your local public library	5,8%
See book reviews in the overseas press	5,8%
Usually too busy to hear about new books	1,9%
Other	8,5%

Most of those who responded to the open-ended option emphasised the importance of radio book reviews.

6.1.2.6 - Question: Do you ever reserve fiction books at the public library? (cf Question 6).

Continuing the direction of the previous question, Question 6 sought to find out in terms of the effort required to find suitable reading matter (cf 4.1.3; 5.2.5), who was prepared to place reservations for books they

wished to read. It was found that the largest category, 49% of respondents, occasionally applied for reservations.

Occasionally	49%
Never	38%
Frequently	6%
Other	7%

Comment: The 'Other' reservations did not relate to fiction reading.

6.1.2.7 - Question: How do you usually find books for your leisure reading at the public library? (cf Question 7).

Question 7 was designed to establish user behaviour as observed in the library relating to the search for leisure-reading titles. Among the respondents those in the largest single category (23,7%) were found to browse along the shelves until they located something suitable or of interest to them. This was followed by the preferences of the respondents in descending order, viz

Browse around the shelves	23,7%
Know what authors you want to read	23%
Know what you want to read	23%
Take books from those returned on the trolley (cf 6.1.2.5.(8)- yielded a result of 9,7%).	15,9%
Use the book jacket as a useful indication of what you want to read	9,4%
Check the catalogues to see what is in stock	9,1%
Prefer to stick to what you know you like to read	8,8%
Ask the library staff to help you	6,4%
Discuss your leisure reading needs with the librarian-in-charge	1%
What other means do you use?	3,3%

Other means employed included the use of personal lists of authors and titles already known, or new ones the respondent wished to read.

6.1.2.8 - Question: What would you say was your most favourite type of book for leisure reading? (cf Question 8).

The open-ended question of users' own leisure reading preferences at Question 8 produced more general answers, and was an attempt to see if there was any difference in leisure reading preferences when respondents were freed from the constraints of a prepared response (cf 6.1.2.4). viz

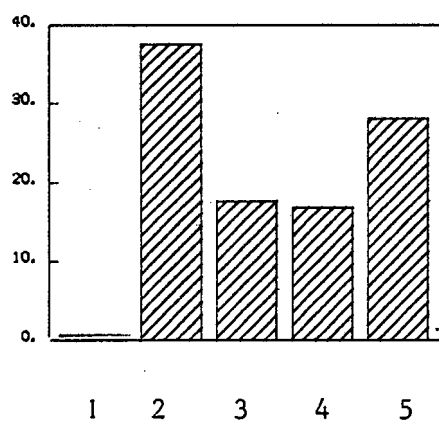
<u>Bestseller fiction</u>	37,6%
<u>Lighter fiction</u>	17,6%
= (Sub-classical fiction 55,2%)	
<u>No categorisation</u> (i e 'general')	16,8%
<u>Other</u>	28%

This question was specifically phrased in an unstructured form as an attempt to check on any bias in responses. In particular this question acted as a check on Question 11, where users were requested 'to only tick authors they would choose from at present time, in an attempt to avoid their citing the many books (particularly by well-known classical authors, read in childhood) which did not relate to their current reading choices...' (cf 5.2.7).

Because of the lack of structure provided by this question, responses tended to be varied and thus difficult to categorise, however they do suggest a width of choice and a somewhat open and relaxed attitude towards leisure reading. The responses indicated that a very small percentage (0,8%) preferred magazines. Similarly 1,6% liked to 'read in depth'

## GRAPH

6.1.2.8 Your most favoured type of leisure reading  
(in percentages)



1. Classical fiction - nil

2. Bestseller fiction - 37,6%

3. Lighter fiction - 17,6%

= Sub-classical fiction 55,2%

4. No categorisation  
'general' - 16,8%

5. Other - 28%

without identifying subjects or categories of interest. It was found surprising that 10,4% indicated no preference: it seems likely though that they were unwilling to discuss their preferences or were unable to remember anything specific. The 28% who cited 'other' categories of reading referred almost entirely to subject interests and works of a biographical nature, which they included with fiction categories in multiple responses. However, in relation to works of classical literature (A fiction), it was extremely interesting to find that this category was neither cited nor mentioned by any respondent.

All fiction choices were categorised in terms of the list of authors at Question 11 (cf 5.2.7; Graphs 6.1.2.4; 6.1.2.8; 6.1.3.11).

6.1.2.9 - Question: Which of the following adverse factors have you experienced at the public library in relation to obtaining the leisure-reading titles of your choice? (cf Question 9).

It was found that long waiting lists for popular titles accounted for 20,8% of the responses. The remainder cited the following reasons for obstruction:

Long waiting lists for popular titles	20,8%
Not enough titles of the type of books you like to read	18,3%
Can never remember the name of authors	17,7%
The arrangement on the shelves	13,9%
Catalogues too complicated to be of any practical help	4,4%
Never know what to look for	4,4%
The library does not seem to have the kind of books you like to read	4,4%
Have read everything on the library shelves	3,1%
Staff too busy to give assistance	2,5%
Other reasons	10,6%

Among these multi-responses the open question (i e 'other reasons') revealed that users did not appear to experience any serious problems, the reasons cited including such aspects as more time to choose books and the desire for a title catalogue.

6.1.2.10.1 - Question: Choosing titles for leisure reading: How long do you usually take to choose books for yourself in the public library ? (cf Question 10.1).

The time taken to choose books varied considerably :

41,9%	took	30-44 minutes
33%	took	15-29 minutes
10,7%	took	45-59 minutes
8,2%	took	an hour

2,6% took longer than an hour to find suitable reading matter, while a further 3,2% either found that the time taken varied or their responses did not relate to fiction reading.

6.1.2.10.2 - Question: Do you ever experience difficulty in choosing books for your leisure reading? (cf Question 10.2).

Occasionally	55%
No difficulty	28%
Frequently	7%

The remaining 10% indicated variously that they either did not read fiction, did not respond, or gave answers which were not relevant.

### 6.1.3 USERS' SURVEY : Author preferences

6.1.3.11      Leisure-reading Authors: Please tick (up to 10) any of the following authors whose books you enjoy reading (cf Question 11) :

In the final section of the survey which considered user preferences by author, Question 11 provided a list of some 142 reasonably well-known fiction authors. The purpose was to give respondents a wide choice, acting as it were as an aide memoire (cf 5.2.5.), in an effort to construct an approximation of their usual leisure-reading patterns. This list also acted as a checking device to correlate answers to Questions 4 and 8. All the authors' names were chosen in close collaboration with the librarian responsible for fiction reviewing for Cape Town City Library Services, the categorisation corresponding with that as proposed in the final model cited in Chapter 4 (4.2.4). As this list yielded the greatest amount of information it will also be used as the source of more of the relevant statistics.

To this list a further 56 names were added by respondents. These names were categorised in a similar manner (cf 5.2.7; 4.2.43). The response to this list totalled 1 350 choices.

From this data it was hoped that users' reading choices would emerge and that it would be possible to isolate overall fiction reading patterns. It was further hoped to observe users' leisure reading patterns in terms of their differing levels of educational attainment.

The overall reading pattern which emerged for fiction reading yielded the following result:

B fiction - (i e Bestseller fiction)	58,6%
A fiction - (i e Classical fiction)	36,4%
C fiction - (i e Lighter fiction)	4,8%

(cf Graph 6.1.3.11).

With regard to the purposeful connotation attached to fiction reading by public library objectives (cf 3.1.2) and the popularity of the bestseller and lighter categories of fiction (cf 2.2.3; 2.4.2; 4.2.4), evidence for a preference for sub-classical fiction as compared with classical fiction will also be considered.

In the observation of the differences between the appeal of the two main categories, viz those of classical and sub-classical fiction, the following figures were achieved:

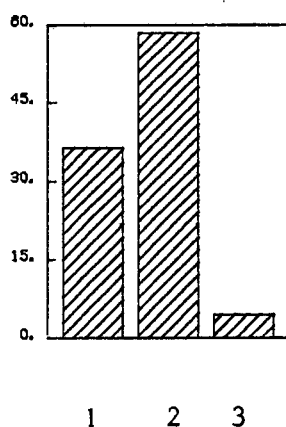
Classical fiction (A fiction) attracted a total response of 36,4%. Combining the appeal rated as the Bestseller category (B fiction with that of Lighter fiction (C fiction), the following percentage for Sub-classical fiction - 63,5% was achieved (cf Graph 6.1.3.11).

These statistics must also be compared with those for Questions 4 and 8, which provided the following data:



## GRAPH

6.1.3.11 Leisure-reading - List of authors : User  
preferences by fiction category (in percentages)



1. Classical fiction (A fiction) - 36,4%

2. Bestseller fiction (B fiction) - 58,7%

3. Lighter fiction (C fiction) - 4,8%

= Sub-classical fiction 63,5%

Question 4 - Sub-classical fiction 64,6%

Question 8 - Sub-classical fiction 55,2%

(cf Graphs 6.1.2.4; 6.1.2.8)

In considering users' reading patterns (cf 6.1.3.11) from an educational perspective, the following figures were obtained:

<u>Level of education</u>	<u>A fiction</u>	<u>B fiction</u>	<u>C fiction</u>
Postgraduate level	45,2%	51,1%	3,2%
Diploma (post-matric)	36,1%	61,7%	3,2%
Matriculation	36,7%	58%	5%
Pre-matriculation	28,2%	64,2%	7,4%

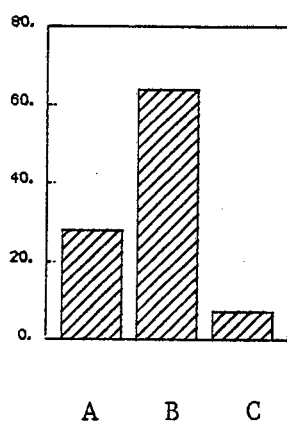
(cf Graphs 6.1.1.12.2; 6.1.3.11c).

Within the A fiction category it is clear that the higher educated groups read more prolifically in this category. However, in an effort to obtain evidence that respondents approached leisure reading in a progressively educational manner (cf 2.2.3; 2.3.1.9), i e attempting to rise up the literary scale from the lighter fiction category to the next, the number of categories involved in each reading pattern formed by these responses to Question 11 (cf Graph 6.1.3.11a), is given in descending order of preference, and provided the following analysis:

## GRAPH

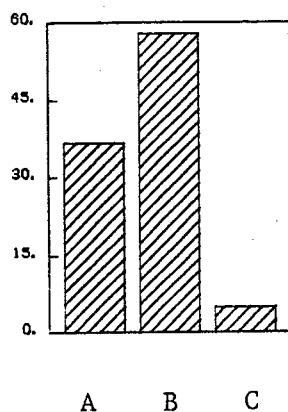
6.1.3.11b Compared with 6.1.3.12.2 : Reading preference by educational level (in percentages)

1. Pre-matriculation standards



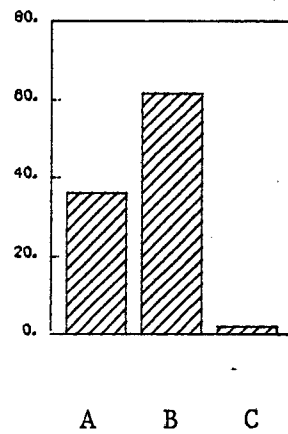
A fiction : 28,2%  
 B fiction : 64,2%  
 C fiction : 7,4%

2. Matriculation or equivalent



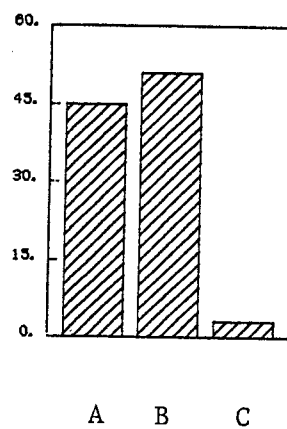
A fiction : 36,7%  
 B fiction : 58%  
 C fiction : 5%

### 3. Diploma (post-matriculation)



A fiction : 36,1%  
 B fiction : 61,7%  
 C fiction : 3,2%

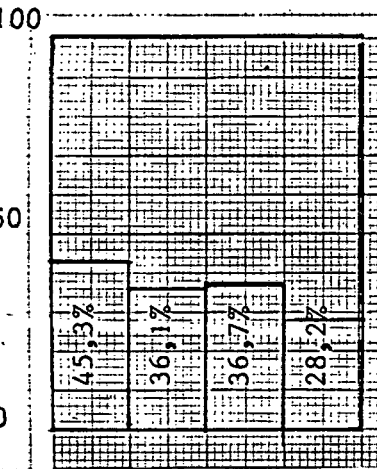
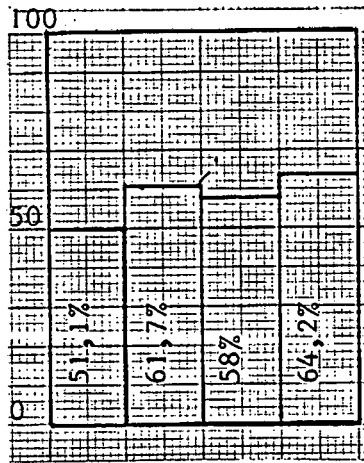
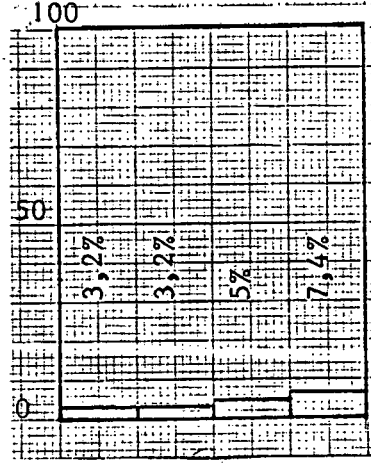
### 4. Postgraduate



A fiction : 45,2%  
 B fiction : 51,1%  
 C fiction : 3,2%

## GRAPH

6.1.3.11c User preferences for categories of fiction by educational level of attainment (in percentages)

A fictionB fictionC fiction

	<u>A FIC</u>	<u>B FIC</u>	<u>C FIC</u>
1 <u>Graduate group</u>	45,2%	51,1%	3,2%
2 <u>Diploma (post-matriculation)</u>	36,1%	61,7%	3,2%
3 <u>Matriculation or equivalent</u>	36,7%	58%	5%
4 <u>Pre-matriculation standards</u>	28,2%	64,2%	7,4%

57% read in all three categories

31% read in two categories

(i.e. = 88% of respondents read 2 or more categories)

6% read in one category

6% read only non-fiction

Here it was found that the overwhelming majority (88%) read in more than one category of fiction simultaneously, six percent read in a single category while the remaining six percent did not read fiction. Of the six percent who only read in one category, three read A fiction and three read B fiction. No single choice of C fiction was found (cf Graph 6.1.3.11a).

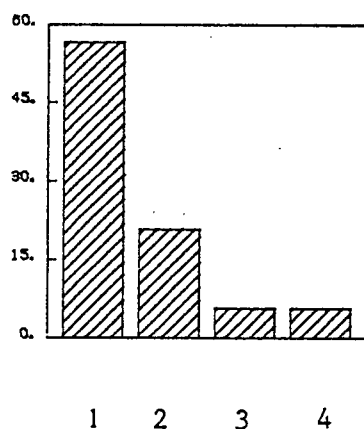
The analysis of this data will be discussed in the following section, and the final section (cf 6.4), will consider the significance of the comparison of the users' survey (cf Appendix) with that of the Librarians' survey (cf Appendix 2).

#### 6.1.4 USERS' SURVEY : Conclusions

In general, the information obtained from the users' survey (cf Appendix 1), showed that the biographical characteristics and leisure reading preferences of the public library users, surveyed at Wynberg Public Library, varied very little in their essentials, from those found in the American surveys, which in turn would also appear to compare favourably with some of the important British research considered (cf 4.1.2.1-5; 6.1.3.11; 6.1.12.2.1-5).

## GRAPH

6.1.3.11a Reading patterns : The range of fiction categories preferred by users (in percentages)



- |                                    |   |  |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Reading in all three categories | - | 57%  |
| 2. Reading in two categories       | - | 31%  |
|                                    | = | <u>Reading in two or more categories</u> 88% |
| 3. Reading in one category         | - | 6%   |
| 4. Other                           | - | 6%   |

The data provided by the user survey (cf Appendix 1) indicated that the majority of users were in the 30 to 39 age group (22%) followed by the 40-49 age group (20%), suggesting a shift in the range of age groups found in earlier studies (cf 4.1.2). These figures were followed by the 60-69 age group (18%) and then the 20-29 age group (16%). The widening of age groups suggests an expansion of education, which could possibly be seen as the logical outcome of improved education since the 1930s and 1940s as predicted by Berelson (cf 4.1.2.1.).

In consideration of the important aspect of educational attainment, it was likewise found that the majority of users not only had a high school education (cf 4.1.2.1) (18%), but a matriculation level of education (48%), with more respondents indicating further education than sub-matriculation levels (32%) (cf 6.1.1.12.2).

Of the more social characteristics, the majority of users were also married (again a predominance of female respondents) (cf 4.1.2.1; 6.1.1.12.3-4). However, if survey questionnaires are completed during the day time, and thus during office hours, a high percentage of housewives might be expected (cf 4.1.2.1).

In relation to the data regarding the occupational status of users, those of professional standing showed the greatest response (29%), and were followed by housewives as already suggested (25%). However, at variance with Berelson's statistics (cf 4.1.2.4), students showed a low percentage (12%). This finding, it might be argued, could also reflect a levelling



of educational attainment in the intervening years (cf 4.1.2.1), as well as improved academic facilities for students.

In regards the statistics concerning vocational training as discussed in Chapter 4 (cf 4.1.2.1), Wynberg Public Library users included 29% employed in professional occupations, 25% were housewives, and the remaining groups showed little difference, viz 9% for white collar and blue collar workers respectively, and 8% for those considering themselves to be in managerial positions.

Wynberg Public Library was chosen particularly because it serves a wide area of differing social communities, the findings undoubtedly show that respondents tended towards Berelson's 'typical' middle class public library user (cf 4.1.2.1), being of a fairly high educational level and socioeconomic standing (cf 6.1.1.12.2; 6.1.1.12.5).

In relation to respondents' public library leisure reading correlation with the literature (cf 4.1.2.1) was also observed. Here it was found that users exhibited a firm preference for sub-classical fiction reading (cf Graphs 6.1.3.11 & 6.1.3.11c).

In consideration of user habits, or behaviour relating to the frequency and intensity of library use (cf 6.1.2.1), bearing in mind the relatively low percentage of the population who actually borrow books from the public library (cf 5.2.1), it would seem apparent from the data provided that no particular effort is extended on the part of the users to acquire suitable books for their leisure reading requirements.

It was found that the largest single category of respondent (i.e. 42%) reported that they only visited the library once in three weeks, and that a combination of figures suggests that 52% of users came at least once a fortnight, taking approximately 30 - 45 minutes to choose their books (cf 6.1.2.10.1) and that they heard about the books they wished to read chiefly by word of mouth (cf 6.1.2.5). A much smaller percentage checked book lists provided by the library, or read reviews in overseas newspapers (some of which may be found in public library reading rooms).

Finding suitable books in the library appeared to be governed by fairly haphazard methods of approach, with many either browsing the shelves, choosing authors they already knew or checking the returned-books trolley. The checking of the catalogue, discussing wants with staff and particularly the thought of approaching the librarian-in-charge revealed a surprisingly low priority (cf 6.1.2.7).

Difficulties experienced in finding suitable titles (cf 6.1.2.9), suggest the possibility that not enough books were provided of the type many users wished to read (which included titles on the reservation shelves), but it was also obvious that many users came to the Library unprepared to find books for their leisure reading.

Regarding the important aspect of user leisure-reading preferences, however, the annual issue statistics for Wynberg Public Library show 70,2% for fiction and 29,2% for non-fiction (1979-84) (cf 5.2.1; 6.1.3.11), but as previously mentioned, these figures do not indicate the difference

between classical and sub-classical fiction but <sup>none the less</sup> exhibit an overwhelming preference for fiction in general.

Overall statistics provided by Question 11 showed that classical fiction accounted for 36,4% of users' preferences. This did not correlate with Questions 4 and 8 which accounted for 12,8% and nil, but as previously mentioned, the presence of bias cannot be entirely ignored, and thus it is suggested to be the <sup>most likely</sup> reason for the discrepancy.

Sub-classical fiction (i e B and C fiction) as evident in responses to Question 11 (cf 6.1.3.11) exhibited a preference of 63,5%, a figure which correlates reasonably closely to those of Question 4, with preferences of 64,6%, and a little less with those of Question 8 with 55,2% (cf Graphs 6.1.2.4 & 6.1.2.8).

In regard to the educational levels and fiction reading patterns as isolated in Question 11, while it might be expected that a rise in classical fiction would be evident with increased learning, such exposure to books being integral to greater education (cf 4.4), the expectation that the reading patterns of the graduate group would show a distinct predominance of classical fiction, indicating not only the educational ability but also the desire to achieve greater reading satisfaction, was not fulfilled. Similarly the sub-matriculation group did not illustrate that their lack of education either dictated a preference for the lighter fiction category or deterred them from reading works of a more complex nature. In common with the other educational groups, both extremes of educational attainment indicated a preference for the bestseller category.

Perhaps the most striking information to emerge from the Question 11 responses, was that the shape of the reading patterns for all educational levels, was remarkably similar. Instead of a choice which inclined towards the level of their educational abilities, it was found that members of all educational groups were likely to choose any of the fiction categories at 'the present time'. Further it was found that the lower educational levels indicated that they not only read a surprisingly small percentage of lighter fiction, but a much larger percentage of classical fiction than had been anticipated.

Considering the possibility that users progressed up the literary scale in an educational manner, inasmuch as each educational group read from the least-complex works towards those of the greatest complexity, in progressive manner from one category to the next, it was found that 57% of respondents read in all three categories and that and overall 88% regularly read in two or more categories of fiction. Very few respondents actually read in only one single category, with no evidence of any user only reading C fiction or the lighter fiction category.

The dominant purpose for which respondents chose books in the public library was stated by the majority (52,3%) as being for leisure reading (cf 6.1.2.2), and the dominant category which satisfied this purpose was found to be sub-classical fiction, the greatest popularity being accorded to the category of the bestseller or B fiction.

To conclude, it would appear that the public library user is still determined by those characteristics which are associated with the middle-

class members of society, in general relating to better education and vocational training (cf 4.1.2.1). While the majority of respondents indicated that they borrowed books for leisure purposes, and such purposes were found to be related to the achieving of relaxation and pleasure rather than for more purposeful or educational reasons. Evidence of a marked progression up the literary scale towards greater reading satisfactions by users, was not found, while, as already mentioned, it appears that all educational groups exhibit fairly similar reading patterns. This suggests not so much the desire to 'acquire a taste for knowledge and good literature' (cf 2.2.3), but a more horizontal movement over all three categories of fiction, indicating that different satisfactions are required by users. These satisfactions must therefore bear some relation to changing wants as exhibited at different times by users.

## 6.2 LIBRARIANS' SURVEY

### 6.2.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the previous chapter (cf 5.2.1), the staff who participated in this survey all held relatively senior positions in their branches and also possessed some recognised form of qualification in librarianship at the time.

The questions, therefore, were based mainly upon concepts derived from the professional literature, with which, it was hoped, staff members would be sufficiently familiar to enable them to provide discerning responses reflecting their own attitudes and opinions.

The purpose of the empirical survey - arising from the research proposition (cf 4.4) - was to compare staff attitudes towards, and perceptions of, the leisure or recreational reading habits of public library users with the expressed preferences of the users themselves, in an attempt to ascertain whether or not there are conflicts in expectation between the two groups, and, if so, to determine the basis of such conflict.

Where practicable, the wording of each question will be given in full, while in an attempt to obtain the closest estimate of the majority choice in the analysis of the data, as discussed in Chapter 5, the sum of the first and second choices will be used where the ranking of preferences is called for (cf 5.3).

In the final chapter (Chapter 7) the finding of the empirical study will be matched with the historical and contemporary perspectives drawn from the professional literature dealing with public library fiction-reading, particularly as summarised at the end of Chapter 4 (cf 4.3), in an endeavour to establish the extent to which historical precedents and theoretical projections have exerted any influence on the environment surveyed. Finally, in the light of the evidence provided by both the literature study and the two surveys, it will be endeavoured to determine whether or not and to what extent the research proposition may be considered valid.

#### 6.2.2 LIBRARIANS' SURVEY : Biographical data and reading preferences

As in the case of the users' survey, to facilitate respondents' ease of entry and to assist in their concentration, the more simple questions were placed at the beginning of this questionnaire (cf 5.2.5) (cf Appendix 2).

Question A was designed to record the name of the respondent's branch library.

Question B was intended to establish the educational levels of staff respondents, not all of whom were fully professional librarians. The total sample comprised 38 persons, of whom 60,5% were found to possess either a postgraduate library and information science diploma or a B.Bibl. degree. 18,4% held an Association of the [British] Library Association or equivalent professional or paraprofessional qualification and 13,1% had a Lower Diploma in Librarianship. The highest professional qualification

among the respondents was an honours degree in Librarianship and Information Science, which was held by 7,8% of the total sample.

Question C looked at the length of professional experience of staff respondents. It was found that:

- 23,6% - had gained two years' experience or less; that
- 18,4% - had gained between three and five years' and six and eight years' experience; and
- 38,1% - had gained between six and eight years' experience; and that
- 13,1% - had jointly completed between 9-12 years', 13-15 years' and 21-26 years' experience.

Question D sought to establish what other library experience staff members possessed. 28,9% indicated that they had also worked in university or school libraries, while the majority of 71,1% only had public library experience.

Question E was concerned with groupings by age. The survey revealed that the largest single category, i.e. respondents in their early 30s, comprised 31,5% of the total sample. 26,3% were in their 40s; 23,6% were in their 20s and 18,4% were in their 60s.

Question F related to the reading habits of the staff themselves. They were asked to state how many books they habitually read in a month. 34,2% of the sample indicated that they read between six and ten books per month; 31,5% that they read between one and five per month; 23,6% an



average of eleven to 15 per month, and 10,5% between 16 and 20 books per month.

Question G asked for the percentage of fiction in staff members' overall reading. Respondents showed a wide range from seven who read between 25% and 75% and twelve who read between 50% and 100%.

In Question H respondents were asked to identify the titles of books they were reading at the time of the survey. Of the 83 titles cited, 31,5% were non-fiction and 63,9% were fiction categories. Of the 25,3% related to the A fiction or classical fiction category and as far as could be determined, the remainder (38,6%) fell into the categories of B and C fiction or sub-classical fiction. (cf 6.2.4.10).

### 6.2.3 LIBRARIANS' SURVEY : Public library objectives

The importance of public library objectives in the running and development of public libraries has been discussed at length in Chapter 3, while, so as to establish staff attitudes towards such objectives, those as defined by the Library Association in 1971 (cf 3.1.2) and as used by the Cape Town City library service (cf 4.2.4), became the basis of Question 1.

6.2.3.1 Question : What is your reaction to the definition of the public library objectives as prepared by the Public Library Research Group of the London and Home counties branch of the [British] Library Association (cf The Library Association Record Vol 73, no 12. 1971 p 233) ? (cf Question 1). viz

6.2.3.1.1 Education : To foster and provide means for self-development of the individual/group at whatever state of education, closing the gap between the individual and recorded knowledge (cf Question 1.1).

Responses received were as follows:

Agree	-	76,3%
Don't agree	-	2,6%
Agree, with reservations	-	21,1%

Of those who had reservations, 18,4% added comments clarifying their position.

The main opinions expressed in these comments concerned the limits to which education through the public library should go. While one respondent pointed out that it was not possible for the public library to educate its adult clientele unreservedly, other comments indicated opposition to the idea that literacy programmes should be included or that textbooks needed by students or pupils for formal education should be provided. There was consensus, however, that the public library should be involved in informal education independently of either schools, colleges or academic institutions.

6.2.3.1.2 Information : To bring individual/group information quickly and in depth, particularly on topics of current concern (cf Question 1.2).

Agree	-	73,6%
Don't agree	-	2,6%
Agree with reservations	-	23,6%

All those who had reservations provided comments.

These reservations expressed concern regarding finance, the accuracy of topical material provided, and the selection of such material.

6.2.3.1.3 Culture : To be one of the principal centres of cultural life and promote a keener participation, enjoyment and appreciation of all the arts (cf Question 1.3).

Agree	-	65,7%
Don't agree	-	nil
Agree, with reservations	-	34,2%

Again, all those who had reservations provided comments.

It appears on the whole that the promotion of culture was not considered a very high priority, judging from respondents' perceptions of public library objectives; most of the librarians who provided open-ended answers saw it as an idealistically conceived aim which did not lend itself readily to practical application.

6.2.3.1.4 Leisure : To play a part in encouraging the positive use of leisure and providing material for change and relaxation (cf Question 1.4).

Agree	-	86,8%
Don't agree	-	nil
Agree with reservations	-	13,1%

Those with reservations provided comments.

Their comments exhibited a general lack of formal agreement as to the limits to be imposed by public libraries in supplying leisure-reading material in response to users' demands.

6.2.3.2 Comments were requested relating to the issues raised in 1.1 - 1.4, including the addition of any other analogous aspects (cf Question 2).

It had been hoped to elicit a comprehensive response reflecting the views of staff members on the Library Association's set of public library objectives. Disappointingly, only 21,5% of the sample responded. Among the reactions received, the following aspects were raised: (a) concern was expressed regarding the presumed disproportionately low spending on the acquisition of books as a percentage of the total library budget: (b) one respondent considered that all the objectives were what was termed 'over ambitious' 'impractical' and 'pretentious': (c) another respondent suggested that there was insufficient recognition in the objectives of the importance of meeting the spiritual and emotional needs of users; while

three persons claimed that, in practice, librarians on the whole merely paid 'lip-service' to idealistic objectives of this kind, as they were unable to begin to do justice to the proposed ideals while being overburdened with the routine house-keeping imposed upon them by their superiors: (d) some maintained that the public library was 'relying on the dissemination of low-grade literature to justify its existence' in more quantitative terms, rather than querying the predominance of light-fiction issuing in its cultural role: (e) it was suggested that the public library should direct its energies towards non-formal education, thus 'bringing information to the people'.

6.2.3.3 This question sought to test priorities of the objectives by asking respondents to rank them by importance. The first priority listed signified only marginal differences. However, by combining the first and second choices (cf 5.3) a clearer pattern emerged (cf Question 3) :

Highest priority: (1.2) information	- 32,4%
Second highest priority: (1.3) education	- 28,3%
Third highest priority: (1.4) leisure	- 24,3%
Lowest priority: (1.3) culture	- 14,8%

(cf Graph 6.2.3.3).

6.2.3.3.2 Asked to elaborate briefly upon the reasons underlying such choices, 89,4% of respondents accepted the invitation (cf Question 3.2).

Here a strong commitment to the promotion of the objectives of education and information was evident, being mentioned in 50% of the comments

submitted, while only 17,6% of the respondents emphasised the pre-eminence of leisure. More respondents considered that it was the function of the public library to educate the public ('education', it should be mentioned, was seen in terms of 'self-development' or the development of talents).

Other comments (32,3% of the respondents) suggested (a) that the constructive use of leisure was indeed subsumed among the objectives of education, information and culture, or that all four objectives were in fact educative in intent; (b) that all four public library objectives were of equal importance; and (c) that the reading of non-fiction afforded respondents so much pleasure that the lines between education and leisure became blurred. It was stressed that on the whole, however, the interpretations and applications of the objectives should be flexible and interchangeable in relation to the needs of the community concerned. Reflecting on the importance accorded the objective of information, one respondent cited the current trend of emphasising effective information retrieval in public libraries, while another saw it as vitally important for the public library to keep abreast of the times - hence the paramount role of information dissemination in its societal role.

#### 6.2.3.4 Question: In which direction would you prefer to see the public library orientate itself for future development (cf Question 4)?

The options offered to respondents were designed to test the consistency of responses elicited. The first choice reaffirmed their preference for the informational objective with 24,3% of the respondents desiring the public library to be seen primarily as an information-disseminating

centre. This preference was followed in ranked order by the ideal of the public library as:

Information-disseminating centre	-	24,3%
A cultural centre	-	21,%
A recreational centre	-	15,1%
A multi-media agency	-	13,4%
An academic 'people's university'	-	11,7%
A social centre	-	8,4%
A study centre for school pupils	-	5,8%

No other projected views of the ideal public library were specified.

6.2.3.5 Question: Do you consider any of the following user-variables as potentially important in their effect on the public library in terms of the provision of suitable bookstock (cf Question 5)?

6.2.3.5.1 Age:

Yes	-	65,7%
No	-	21%
No opinion	-	13,1%

Of those who considered that the user-variable as such was important, 65,7% provided comments. Among these responses the changing interests and needs associated with different age groups (e g retirement), as well as with occupations featured prominently.

#### 6.2.3.5.2 Social-economic environment (cf Question 5.2) :

Yes	-	71%
No	-	21%
No opinion	-	7,8%

Of those who considered that the user-variable was important 73,6% offered comments. Socioeconomic levels were perceived by the consensus as having considerable influence upon reading tastes of users. Those of a higher socioeconomic level were characterised by 'advanced', 'higher' or 'refined' reading tastes which included non-fiction, while those of a socially less privileged level were considered to exhibit an increased taste for lighter fiction-reading. The latter trend also applied to the elderly. Those from lower social levels were seen as wishing to improve their status by study in their leisure time (this perception also embracing younger users). The existence of a close relationship between socioeconomic levels and the complexity of reading levels was acknowledged by respondents, who considered that limitations in reading were closely related to the range of experience with which users were familiar. One respondent expressed the view that while the public library had a commitment to satisfy the needs of its community, this should not be at the cost of lowered library standards.

#### 6.2.3.5.3 Level of formal education (cf Question 5.3) :

Yes	-	81,5%
No	-	13,1%
No opinion	-	5,2%



Of those who considered that the user-variable was important 78,9% made comments. It was apparent that respondents perceived no great difference between higher socioeconomic levels and higher education. Hence, responses tended to repeat opinions stated in the previous section. However, emphasis was placed not only upon increased complexity of reading tastes with higher education, but on increased skills, wider interests and generally more 'challenging' reading.

6.2.3.5.4 Sex (cf Question 5.4) :

Yes	-	55,2%
No	-	39,4%
No opinion	-	5,2%

Of those who considered that this user-variable was important 52,6% provided comments.

Differences in reading preferences and patterns by sex became especially pronounced with regard to the light-fiction categories, as suggested by Mann (1971) (cf 4.2.4). The category of romance tended to be associated with female readers and that of 'murder thrillers and westerns' with male users; similarly, subject interests in non-fiction displayed typical gender preferences, the most obvious cases in point being such typical preferences as cookery among female users, and carpentry among male readers.

#### 6.2.3.5.5 Users' own motivation (cf Question 5.5) :

Yes	-	57,8%
No	-	15,7%
No opinion	-	26,3%

Among those who considered that this user-variable was important 60,5% commented.

The importance of the user-variable of motivation was designed to establish staff appreciation of user motivation as a means of exploring the researcher's theory that this constitutes an influencing factor of paramount importance, embracing all other known factors. However, this attempt failed largely because respondents tended to approach their responses from a strongly personal or institutional vantage point, rather than taking the larger dispassionate view. In general, users with motivation were seen on the whole as those who 'did not conform', tending to 'make nuisances' of themselves in the library while obtaining books. Respondents by consensus considered that such users tended to influence the composition of the book stocks unduly, by requiring books not in general demand among the rest of the library's clientele. The concept of user motivation was also associated with a form of individualism developed through education, often made manifest in requests for out-of-the-ordinary titles obtained from reviews read or films seen. It should be noted, however, that in view of the many very conflicting answers received, it seems probable, either that the question as formulated, was misconstrued by at least some respondents or that the librarians questioned did not

endorse the assumption by the researcher of the importance of motivation in users' efforts to read a desired title - irrespective of its complexity in relation to their educational attainments.

6.2.3.6 Question: Please indicate the degree of importance you attach to the following aspects of user-satisfaction, using a scale ranging from 1 (very important) to 5 (of no importance) (cf Question 6).

This question sought to establish the priorities accorded by librarians to those aspects of their work that related to user-satisfaction. Overall, respondents saw the most important priority (15,5%) as the selection of library bookstock. This was followed by factors such as:

Selection of library bookstock	- 15,5%
Professional attitude of staff	- 14,6%
Effective top library management	- 12,7%
Funding	- 12,7%
Accommodation	- 10,5%
Quality workshop-training for all staff	- 10,5%
Scientific knowledge among staff of community served	- 9,1%
Publicity	- 7,3%
User education	- 4,5%

Other suggestions (2,2%) embraced additional factors including reference to staff skill and hours of opening. Three respondents failed to rank the full spectrum of factors, confining their replies to their first five

priorities, but as these represented valid opinions they were included in the statistical summary.

6.2.3.7 Question: What do you consider to be desirable abilities in professional librarians? Please rank the following in order of importance to you on a scale ranging from 1 (most desirable) to 5 (least desirable) (cf Question 7).

In effect librarians were asked to define their own role in the library in an ideal situation. It emerged that the single most favoured attribute (16,3%) was the ability of the professional librarian to assess the needs of the individual user. This was followed by considerations such as:

To be able to assess the needs of the individual user	- 16,3%
To be able to develop the public library's collection on a policy that relates to the manifest needs of the communities served	- 13,0%
To appreciate the potential effect of different types of books on different users	- 12,1%
To instill a love of reading by the provision of books of good quality	- 11,6%
To understand that different users can obtain different satisfactions from reading the same book	- 11,2%
To be a reader, preferably of a wide range of books themselves	- 10,7%
To be able to define what is a worthwhile book	- 10,7%
To guide public library users away from books of an inferior nature to more worthwhile reading	- 5,1%
To be instrumental in upholding the moral and spiritual values of the community	- 2,3%

Among the 6,5% respondents' comments, most cited pleasantness, tact and approachability as additional desirable attributes.

6.2.3.8 The term 'reading pattern' relating to an individual public library user is frequently encountered in library journals. Could you define, in a few words of your own, what the term means to you (cf Question 8)?

This question was important and interesting to the researcher, bringing together the reality of staff awareness of the reading requirements or needs of their library users. It sought firstly estimate the understanding of the types of satisfaction available from fiction reading in terms of all the needs or wants expressed and unexpressed as suggested by Totterdell (cf 4.1.3) and physical, social and intellectual needs as proposed by Maslow (cf 4.1.3). Secondly, this question was designed to determine staff members' understanding of the assertion by Murison that different reading choices were made in accordance with the differing needs of the moment - a premise suggested by the observation that highly educated people often read very light fiction for leisure-time reading (cf 4.2.4).

As this was an open question, tabulation was not possible, and thus a wide variety of responses was received. However, several trends were worthy of note. The preponderance of opinion suggested that user satisfaction was viewed from the point of view of the library, in terms of demands made upon its services, viz

The demands made on librarians by users to satisfy their needs in terms of requirements, provision and service.

Several staff members viewed the situation in a single dimension and suggested that a reading pattern constituted what a person read most of, or 'what most people asked for'. Awareness of user interests was found, as well as of recurring reading features over a period of time; these attitudes were perceived by one respondent as a pattern of growth, showing types of books that appealed at different stages of life. Another defined this term as the types of books the reader 'progressed through'.

One staff member considered that a reading pattern brought together reading interests, and a further respondent equated this term with a range of reading that included fiction, non-fiction and also purpose.

6.2.3.8.1 Question: If you are able to discern reading patterns in the reading habits of your users, what type of reading pattern/s do you consider is the most general (cf Question 8.1)?

This question solicited actual examples of reading patterns as perceived by staff members. This too was an open question, and tabulation was not possible. However, consensus of staff members' opinion suggested those categories of reading which were most popular. For example, several librarians simply cited the bestseller category. Generally popular fiction and such subjects as travel and biography were also suggested. Three respondents related users' own interests to reading, and one linked interests with the need to relax. However, quality was mentioned frequently, and a further staff member related the lack of quality to the idea of progressive reading, viz

Lighter and bestseller fiction: 'not really progressing'.

6.2.3.9 Question: What particular concepts have you formed of the public library objective of leisure reading? Please rank any of the following that may coincide with your own thinking. Please rank 1 (in accordance with your own thinking), to 5 (at variance with your own thinking) (cf Question 9).

This question attempted to ascertain librarians' views on the purpose of leisure reading. The most favoured concept (14,7%) in terms of leisure reading was 'To acquire insights and enlightenment from the experience of others' (3). This was followed by the following aims:

To acquire insights and enlightenment from the experience of others	- 14,7%
As a way of attaining mental relaxation (2)	- 14,2%
Purely as a means of giving the pleasure of reading and re-reading books in one's own free time (10)	- 13,6%
As a means of constructively organising leisure time (1)	- 12,5%
To be able to share in the thoughts of superior minds of the world's best writers	- 9,8%
To enjoy the aesthetic pleasure of literary craftsmanship	- 9,2%
To contribute to the mental health of the community by affording the means of defusing tensions from the work situation	- 6,5%
As a means of improving reading skills	- 5,4%
As bait, to encourage users to come to the library and thus come into contact with decent books	- 3,8%
As socially acceptable pastime	- 3,2%

The open-ended question for 'own ideas' received a 6,5% response. One respondent enlarged upon the most favoured concept of gaining insights,

suggesting that it was through the medium of the 'good novel' that users might gain not only new insights into life but knowledge through the experience of others. Another considered that it was the business of the librarian to try and bring people in touch with books to enable them to obtain pleasure and value from reading. The notion of pleasure featured in several comments, and another respondent thought that question 10 was 'all embracing', viz that leisure reading should be purely for pleasure.

#### 6.2.4 LIBRARIANS' SURVEY : Fiction categories

6.2.4.10 Question : Public libraries usually have some unofficial means of dividing fiction titles into categories, such as the following:

Classical fiction: Classical literature or other works of acknowledged literary merit, whose authors are cited in the Companions to English and American literature (cf 10.1.1).

Bestseller fiction: This category usually includes the main range of fiction, such as bestsellers, historical novels, family sagas, novels of human relationships and crime novels (cf 10.1.2).

Lighter fiction: Books exhibiting a more predictable and stereotyped plot-line, often similar to that of 10.1.2 but with less depth of characterisation and complexity. This category also includes such sub-genres as the love-story, who-dun-it-crime stories, doctor-nurse and cowboy stories (cf 10.1.3).



In general these questions were posed to bring forth basic library staff opinions on fiction reading and specifically relating to sub-classical fiction categories (cf 10.1.2-3).

6.2.4.10.2 Question: Do you generally agree with the rationale underlying these divisions and the nomenclature used to designate them (cf Question 10.2)?

Agree	-	76,3%
No	-	5,2%
Yes, with reservations	-	18,4%

In the case of 'no' or 'yes, with reservations' answers 26,3% respondents provided comments.

Several responses suggested that 'serious' fiction was a more acceptable term than 'classical' fiction and also that the term 'romance' was preferable to 'love-story', but other than these relatively minor objections to the terms proposed, no firm proposals for a different method of dividing the categories of fiction were offered. One staff member considered that the application and usage of terms were 'subjective' and, therefore, useful only internally. Another respondent stated that these divisions provided no indication of division by 'quality' (which might possibly be seen as a basis for a method of division). One librarian thought that rigid categorisation might unduly complicate the process of book selection, resulting in 'worthwhile B fiction' not being bought at all, while yet another suggested that the very classification of books into categories was in itself subjective, as many bestseller fiction works

had not 'stood the test of time'. One respondent, in turn, considered that lighter fiction 'does not contribute to the reading experience' and argued that better works in this category instead could be purchased.

The idea that satisfaction could be derived by all readers of bestseller fiction was a recurrent theme among respondents who commented, as was conviction that the reader of lighter fiction is not a 'serious' reader. However, the transient nature of lighter fiction reading was referred to by one respondent who thought that as the differing categories of fiction are usually integrated on the shelves, readers were encouraged indirectly to change from lighter fiction to other categories 'when they were ready to do so'.

In as much as several respondents reiterated the need for the public library to serve the whole community, attention to book selection criteria and general standards was urged frequently. Perhaps one staff member summed up the various strands of concern relating to the complexity of conflict between the desire to maintain standards of quality and that of providing public library users with full and realistic reading experience in the following comment:

Lighter fiction is escapist. A progressive institution should help focus people's attention on realistic situations.

The issue was assessed equally simply by another who commented that, despite the low regard in which lighter fiction was held, such works should none the less be provided if the library was to serve the whole community.

On the whole, respondents' comments covered a wide spectrum, ranging on the one hand from a view that there was a great need for lighter fiction and that accordingly there should be less prejudice against it in book selection, to an opinion on the other that this fiction category contributed nothing to the reading experience while at worst presenting a distorted view of life. There was consensus, however, that it should be provided if really required, but only in limited title ranges, and even then with a view to encouraging users to read bestseller and classical fiction, rather than detracting from the importance of providing 'worthwhile' reading.

6.2.4.10.3 Question: Do you think that more prominence should be given to the provision of lighter fiction in public libraries (cf Question 10.3)?

Yes	-	21%
No	-	55,2%
No opinion	-	2,6%
Yes, with reservations	-	21%

An elaboration of reasons for replying 'Yes' elicited comments from 26,3% of the respondents, while those explaining negative comments were received from 68,4% of the responding librarians. It was apparent, however, that the two sets of responses coalesced, making it desirable to discuss them in conjunction with another.

Although many comments relating to the reading of lighter fiction were of an adverse nature, several respondents considered that even such reading was difficult or 'heavy' for some members of the public who are

traditionally non-members of the public library. Another important point raised was that mere 'book providers', rather than professionally qualified librarians were needed for the task of disseminating lighter fiction. Other respondents suggested that lighter fiction could be obtained at 'other agencies', particularly as, in their opinion, the emphasis on its provision detracted from the educational function of the public library.

However, although several respondents contended that many users would indeed prefer more lighter fiction, the underlying implication was that this category was perceived as serving as a starting point in leisure reading to coax people into reading bestseller and classical fiction (cf 2.2.3). Thus it was apparent that leisure reading was considered as a progressive process, with library staff guiding users from one step to the next.

It was also suggested that as users were not aware of officially designated divisions in fiction reading, readers of lighter fiction could be 'cajoled' unwittingly into reading 'bestseller fiction'. The attitude that 'better books' provide increased satisfaction was emphasised in a comment which expressed the view that it was the responsibility of the public library to provide stimulating literature of lasting value rather than competing with other agencies which disseminate 'non-literary' or mere 'pulp' fiction.

6.2.4.11 Question : On the basis of your experience, please rank 11.1 - 11.3 in order of popularity among public library users along a scale ranging from 1 (very popular) to 5 (very unpopular) (cf Question 11).

This question sought to quantify the strength of the popularity of the three fiction categories, as perceived by library staff. The priority ranking was as follows among the respondents:

Classical fiction	-	6,4%
Best seller fiction	-	51,6%
Lighter fiction	-	41,9%

6.2.4.12 Question: How would you account for the popularity of the fiction category identified in Question 11? Please rank along a scale ranging from 1 -(very relevant) to 5(totally irrelevant)(cf Question 11).

The options identified in the questions made provision for an identification of users' physical and psychological motives relating to the satisfactions provided by all the professional literature. Priority ranking displayed the following pattern:

Ease of entry into the narrative	-	14,6%
A quick and harmless means of escape from one's immediate surroundings	-	13,4%
An easy form of relaxation	-	12,3%
Relatively little effort or concentration required	-	10,6%
A means of vicarious experience	-	10,1%
Provides a little harmless excitement	-	8,4%
Provides a sense of glamour in an otherwise dull and drab world	-	8,4%
Gives some sense of comfort for the unhappy and lonely	-	7,8%
An easy means of acquiring interesting knowledge	-	7,3%

The final open-ended question elicited comments from 6,7% of the respondents. These comments did not produce additional motives. However, the comments offered by two staff members provided evidence of an awareness that many people did not have time for complex reading, especially when they were exhausted after a day's work. Another respondent considered the question more relevant to the issue of lighter fiction reading than to that of reading 'bestsellers' (which, incidentally, were rated as the most popular category), but only because in her view C fiction readers had been driven away to the 'swop shops'. However, the balance of opinion among the librarians questioned showed a preference for bestseller fiction reading, provided that it was of suitable quality and, in addition, offered a reasonable approximation to the realities of life in the identification of characters and situations for all readers. This opinion was reaffirmed by two other respondents who registered a dislike of stereotyped fiction and endorsed the attitude that enjoyment was to be found for all within the confines of the bestseller category of fiction.

6.2.4.13 Question: Do you consider the provision of lighter fiction (cf 10.1.3) to be in conflict with the public library's objectives as outlined in 6.2.3.1.1 - 1.4 (cf Question 13)?

This question once again approached the problem of leisure reading from the more extreme position of lighter fiction, seeking to attract discussion as to whether or not librarians saw it to be in conflict with public library objectives. The responses, as reflected in percentages, were as follows:

Yes	-	18,4%
No	-	73,6%
No opinion	-	7,8%

Of those who responded in the affirmative 26,3% provided comments. Two of these respondents considered that the quality of fiction was important; one of them claimed specifically that unless this element was present, there was no justification for the provision of lighter fiction. One respondent went so far as to question the nature of the 'quality of life' claimed to be sustained by this category. Yet another considered that lighter fiction, by its very nature, did not contribute to the enrichment of life. Accordingly, as suggested by one commentator, library funds should not be spent on this category at all. One librarian contended that the dissemination of C fiction was in conflict with the cultural objectives of the public library, while another complained that public library objectives were not specific enough to prevent such an occurrence. The consensus of opinion in this regard was perhaps summarised most aptly by one respondent who considered that lighter fiction was 'pleasant but not productive'.

6.2.4.13.2 Question: Please comment on the following statement: 'free fiction is as illogical and as big an imposition on the rate-payers as municipally subsidised free suburban arenas would be...' (Scott Haigh, The Argus, 25.5.79) (Question 13.2).

Pursuing Haigh's challenge (i.e. should public money be used for purely recreational purposes ?) to the extreme, a 100% response rate was elicited, exhibiting the following spread of responses:

Disagree	-	21%
Disagree, with reservations	-	68%
Agree, with reservations	-	5,2%
Consider it far-fetched	-	5,2%

This question elicited far more outspoken comments than any other in the questionnaire, many respondents springing to the defence of the library and the provision of fiction. Three librarians considered that the question was either 'rubbish' or 'nonsense', while two others suggested that the author of the statement 'never read fiction'.

With regard to the issue of ratepayers being given value for their money, comments suggested that the rate-paying public were well served in so far as many individuals read lighter fiction, which was essential (from a community point of view) to provide for the needs of all. As regards the provision of fiction as such, many librarians strongly defended the public library's right to provide facilities for such reading, qualifying their statements, however, with the claim that quality fiction was completely justified as its distribution was integral to the educational objectives of the public library. One librarian thought the Haigh statement 'unfair'; another 'too sweeping'. One respondent argued that the public library had changed since the days of 'the people's university', while another raised the telling point that there was <sup>an</sup> analogy between municipal orchestras being subsidised and public libraries being supported in a like manner. Finally, one comment echoed several others, in that there was agreement with the Scott Haigh statement as far as 'inferior fiction' was concerned but that this was not valid in the case of quality fiction.



6.2.4.13.3 Question: Would you say that leisure reading (i.e. reading in your own free time not related to work or formal study), is a more constructive activity than watching television (Question 13.3)?

Comparing leisure reading with television viewing, as a productive leisure-time activity, 86,8% of respondents provided comments. Three-quarters of respondents thought that reading was the more constructive act, while one respondent disagreed (with reservations regarding the type of programme), and another thought the question was at least 'debatable'. Several respondents noted the low quality of television programmes on the whole and felt that reading was a more mentally stimulating activity. In general, responses suggested that a fair judgement depended on what was being viewed or being read in the context of the question.

6.2.4.14 Question: Some public library users habitually read lighter fiction (10.1.3 category). Is it your opinion that if guided by the librarian, such readers could advance to more complex fiction? (Please rank on a scale varying from 1 (with no difficulty) to 5 (quite incapable) (Question 14)).

In an attempt to obtain some indication regarding staff attitudes towards readers of less complex fiction, Question 14 sought opinions concerning the need for guidance in relation to the amount of effort required to read in a more complex fiction category. Respondents considered that users could read more complex fiction -

With a little effort	-	48,9%
With much effort	-	26,5%
Experience no difficulty	-	18,3%
Could not manage at all	-	6,1%

6.2.4.15 Question: 'Some public library users exhibit a wide fiction reading-pattern that encompasses one of great complexity to one which involves very light types of fiction reading. At the other end of the scale some users appear to only read lighter fiction. This implies that more provision should be made for the latter users.' Please comment briefly on the above statement (cf Question 15).

This question produced a 100% response, yielding a wide range of comments. Of all the opinions offered only two respondents were actively in favour of such provision being made, while over one third were decidedly against it. Of the two in favour, the first considered that there were many whose needs were ignored, while the second understood that professional people, like doctors, had a need for the kind of relief that such reading provided.

Among many opposing views, comments ranged from the suggestion that 'few have such a wide reading-pattern', to the view that lighter fiction is 'undesirable', or at variance with stated public library objectives. At worst, lighter fiction was considered as a 'contribution to mindlessness', and its provision by public libraries viewed as 'pandering to public taste'.

Providing some indication of librarians' attitudes towards leisure-reading purpose and satisfaction, one respondent thought that reading should provide the reader with 'a voyage of discovery and experience', and proposed that those users who had the urge to read lighter fiction should rather watch television or listen to the radio to satisfy their leisure needs.

However, three distinct, if interrelated, themes emerged. In the case of the first, it was suggested that some staff members considered that the library should guide people to better categories of reading, thereby helping to improve users' reading habits.

The second theme related to respondents' opinion that the most important factor was that of maintaining a balance in regard to book stocks, the composition of which they equated with levels of socioeconomic development of the community served. This view also involved the question of providing for the tastes of the majority.

The third theme stemmed from the second and clearly associated the lower socioeconomic levels of the community with lighter fiction reading. Here the conviction was expressed that users became 'conditioned' to the formula-type of writing which characterised this category.

#### 6.2.5 LIBRARIANS' SURVEY: The library and the public

6.2.5.16 Question: With which of the following groups do public libraries have most in common? Please rank along a scale ranging from 1 (very much in common) to 5 (nothing in common) (cf Question 16).

In this section general attitudes towards the public library as an institution and its relationship with the public were sought. The following choices were found -

Schools, colleges and universities	-	36,9%
Community or civic centres	-	26,1%
Museums, art galleries and opera houses	-	23%

Of the comments received from 13,8% of the respondents, one librarian suggested that the public library had more in common 'with other libraries' than with any of the institutions cited above. Two considered a closer relationship with other places of entertainment, and two others suggested a relationship with sport and business organisations in the community served. Another staff member considered that the public library overlapped with most cultural, educational and social institutions, while another raised the point that such a focus depended upon the emphasis the public library concerned placed upon the objective of recreation.

6.2.5.17 Question: Do you consider that the public library reaches enough people (Question 17)?

This question considered whether staff respondents thought that the public library attracted enough users, or whether more people should use the public library. The responses were as follows:

Yes	-	23,6%
No	-	68,4%
No opinion	-	7,8%

A request for comment from those who replied in the negative attracted a 73,6% response rate. One respondent posed the pertinent question as to what percentage of the public could be reached realistically. Most of the comments, however, related not only to the observed fact that a relatively small percentage of the community habitually made use of the public library, but also to the reasons for this phenomenon.

One librarian reiterated the familiar dictum that the library cannot 'be all things to all people' (cf 3.1.2), while another thought that as a relatively young institution the public library has not yet been fully accepted by society. Several remarks reflected this point of view, suggesting that many people were not familiar with the library's services and that they were unaware that public libraries 'can make people happier'. However, several respondents suggested that it was the fault of the library itself, in that it 'never solicited favourable publicity'. Reasons for this were cited as the library's failure to 'sell' itself to its public, a lack of good publicity, weak community involvement, limited cultural action and general absence of public appeal. In the most outspoken comment the opinion was voiced that the public library exhibited 'a lack of dynamic, outgoing policy'.

6.2.5.18     Question: Do you consider the often made claim, viz that the public library is an élitist institution, to be valid (Question 18)?

In this question use of the public library was considered from the opposite end of the scale, but in the continuing context of the provision of suitable bookstock for the community concerned. The response pattern was as follows:

Yes	-	15,7%
No	-	84,2%
No opinion	-	nil

Among the 34,2% of the respondents who volunteered comments, opinions ranged from that of a librarian who considered that there was 'something

for everybody' within the public library to that of another who believed that many librarians deliberately wished the public library to be élitist. One respondent suggested that if as little as 25% of the opinion leaders of society used the public library, this institution would have fulfilled its purpose. Another attempted to define the meaning of élitism in public library terms, suggesting that it encompassed the more motivated members of the community - 'it is the élite (or aspiring élite) who require information, education and enculturation. It is the same group who tend to fulfill their leisure needs through reading rather than sport, television, daydreaming...'

One librarian saw the public library as instilling middle-class values (cf 2.3.1.6) and hence better reading patterns to most of its users, while two others considered the public library as, or as seen to be, an educational institution.

6.2.5.19 Question: Using the user-variable cited in Question 5, in conjunction with any other variable of your choice, could you describe the type of public library user, who, from your own observation, appears to experience maximum difficulty in finding titles to satisfy his/her leisure reading needs (cf Question 19)?

Here the attempt was made to ascertain if there were any specific user variables, in the opinion of library staff that were conducive to difficulties in finding suitable leisure reading in the public library.

A tabulation of the comments received from 94,7% of the respondents showed that of the user-variables identified in 6.2.3.5 the following

factors were considered to be most pertinent in descending order of importance to the incidence of user difficulties:

Age	-	(22,2% - the elderly and 16,6% - the young)
Socioeconomic environment	-	11,1%
Level of formal education	-	27,7%
Sex	-	Nil
Motivation	-	8,3%
Other	-	13,8%

Although no consensus of opinion was apparent, specific comments, however, expressed a wide range of experiences. One librarian considered that 'novel readers' experienced maximum difficulty, three suggested C fiction readers, two pointed to the 'lazy reader', while two others thought that it was the 'very sophisticated' reader who experienced difficulties. One respondent believed that it was the 'read-everything-reader' who experienced greater difficulty in finding suitable leisure reading material.

#### 6.2.6 LIBRARIANS' SURVEY : Conclusions

In comparison to the educational levels of their public library users (cf 6.1.1.12.2), the majority of responding librarians had a university degree together with a postgraduate diploma. Respondents had between two and 26 years' experience (the majority having three to eight years), were mostly in their 30s and under the age of 50, and read between six and ten books a

month, the greater part of which was found to be fiction with a high percentage of literary fiction.

In the important matter of public library objectives (cf 6.2.3.1.1-1.4), it was apparent that there was general consensus on all of these, a preference being shown for information and education, followed by leisure and finally culture.

The high priority accorded the objective of information was reaffirmed (cf 6.2.3.4), the majority expressing a preference for future development for the public library towards an information-disseminating centre. An educational association with schools and universities, rather than a more social or cultural one was also favoured (cf 6.2.5.16).

User-variables or characteristics (cf 6.2.3.5), were considered to have significance in their effect on the provision of bookstock, but the disagreements (21%) were unexpected, as it might be argued that any differences in user characteristics could reasonably be expected to affect their reading wants.

In attempting to assess not only the importance but also the attitudes of staff towards user-satisfaction it was found that the selection of bookstock was considered to be of the greatest importance (cf 6.2.3.6), together with professional attitudes of staff. The most desirable abilities of staff (cf 6.2.3.7), as conceived by staff respondents from their experience, were seen as the assessment of the needs of the users, which were related



to the acquisition of 'insights and enlightenment from the experience of others' (cf 6.2.3.9).

As material to satisfy user needs, the three main divisions of fiction elicited little disagreement at 6.2.4.10.1-3, but 6.2.4.10.3 elicited considerable concern about the provision of lighter fiction, with most respondents, at best, regarding it as a necessary evil. However, when asked to give their own views of the strength of popularity of each of the three categories, respondents considered that bestseller fiction was the most popular, with lighter fiction following closely, and classical fiction lagging far behind.

In accounting for such popularity, the majority felt that it was the ease of entry to the narrative (cf 6.2.4.12) in conjunction with a harmless escape from the world, which attracted users. Such motives for leisure reading hardly correlated with staff members' priorities for leisure reading to gain enlightenment (cf 6.2.3.9). However, the consensus did not feel that lighter fiction in particular conflicted with public library objectives (cf 6.2.4.13) and did not find that 'free fiction' (i.e. in terms of its providing entertainment) was illogical (cf 6.2.4.13.2). Reading was considered by most to be a more constructive form of leisure activity than television, which suggests a more purposeful attitude towards reading but possibly also acknowledges the competition of television for users' free time.

In an effort to obtain staff members' attitudes to public library leisure reading as a whole and the position of sub-classical fiction and the

genres of lighter fiction in particular, respondents were asked (cf 6.2.4.14) whether readers of lighter fiction could, with varying degrees of difficulty, be guided to read more complex works. The general view was that with a little effort such guidance was possible. This attitude is confirmed by frequent comments, to the effect that many staff saw public library reading patterns as a manifestation of progression from one level of reading complexity to the next, and that it was their responsibility to assist readers to rise up the scale (cf 6.2.3.8; 6.2.4.10.2).

Question 17 (cf 6.2.4.17) asked if libraries reached enough people, the underlying suggestion being that many people could not cope with the reading available at public libraries. In this regard, the majority of respondents considered that it did not. One staff member raised the valid question as to just how many members of the public should the library be expected to reach. This was followed by the obvious question (cf 6.2.4.18) as to whether or not the public library was an elitist institution, bearing in mind its limited membership of predominantly middle-class background, as suggested in the professional literature (cf 4.1.2.1). This suggestion was rejected by the majority of respondents.

While considering library staff comments, particularly those concerning the provision of fiction, it became apparent that many of the responses were remarkably similar in tone to those expressed in the nineteenth century, (cf Ch 2), suggesting that past situations and opinions continue to influence public library staff attitudes.

Amongst the many comments was included the idea of sub-classical fiction being acceptable if used to attract readers to the library (cf 2.2.3; 6.2.4.10.3); to increase reading abilities; and, by the use of such fiction categories, cajole users to read progressively better fiction (cf 6.2.4.10.3.2), although the employment of leisure reading works as 'bait' was not identified as an obvious priority (cf 6.2.3.9). Further comments included concern over the lack of reality in sub-classical fiction material (cf 2.2.3.1; 6.2.4.10.3); that it represented a distortion of the real world (cf 6.2.4.10.3), and that people's attention should be directed towards more 'relevant' situations (cf 6.2.4.10.3).

Considerable concern was expressed also in the nineteenth century regarding the extent to which librarians should accede to popular demand (cf 2.2.3). Here again, similar sentiments were found in several comments regarding the setting of limits of quality and quantity in relation to the provision of fiction (cf 6.2.3.1.4; 6.2.4.10.3.2).

Finally to attempt to summarise these findings, the most crucial issues are the attitudes of library staff towards the purpose, and reasons or motives of public library users with the ultimate aim of achieving satisfaction in public library users' leisure reading. To achieve this aim an understanding of the expression of these underlying motives as exhibited by users' habitual reading choices, i.e. their reading patterns would appear to be of the utmost importance.

From this survey it may be seen that the purpose or objectives of the public library considered by the majority of staff respondents to be the most important, was that of the provision of information and education, both of which appear to be very closely linked, i.e. the acquisition of knowledge. In this instance leisure reading was rated of considerably less importance (cf 6.2.3.3).

In regard to the reasons underlying leisure reading, discussed as concepts formed towards the leisure reading objective, staff members marginally indicated that they rated the acquisition of enlightenment as being important (cf 6.2.3.9). In relation to the achievement of user reading satisfaction, the selection of bookstock and the professional attitude of staff were considered important (cf 6.2.3.6), as was the ability of librarians to assess the reading needs of their users and community served (cf 6.2.3.7). It was also noted that there was a degree of awareness that the variables of sex, age, socio-economic status and user motivation would exert an effect on users' leisure reading wants (cf 6.2.3.5).

However, although these aspects were acknowledged by staff respondents as being meaningful, the differing needs of users appeared to have little substance in reality in the questions concerning users' reading patterns (cf 6.1.3.11). Such patterns were either not fully understood or were discounted by many respondents, as was the case in Question 15 (cf 6.2.4.15). Rather frequent references were found to leisure reading related to quality and serious reading, accompanying the concept that leisure reading was perceived by many as being progressively educational where users sought to obtain greater understanding and pleasure, although

a few respondents did acknowledge that some highly educated users read lighter fiction on occasions.

The aspect which provided the greatest interest and concern was the discernible tension between the preferred public library objectives (cf 6.2.3.3) i.e. information and education, and the assertion by the majority of staff respondents that they considered the bestseller category or B fiction, to be their users' preferred choice of leisure reading (cf 6.2.4.11). This confusion is further emphasised in the priorities accorded the importance of the abilities of librarians to assess the needs of their users and to select suitable bookstock (cf 6.2.3.6; 6.2.3.7). Inasmuch as staff members appeared to see no relationship between the choices of their respondents and their achievement of satisfaction, it must be stated that this fundamentally important area may manifestly be seen to be in conflict.

However if the educational objective is applied in relation to the purpose or aims of public library staff, then the many comments received concerning the importance of such attributes as progressive, serious or worthwhile reading, become comprehensible. This attitude was also evident in the responses to Question 14 where over half the staff members considered that with guidance from the librarian and a 'little effort' their users could read more complex fiction' (cf 6.2.4.14). Indeed the importance of applying this objective to leisure regarding was clearly cited by several respondents who suggested that all objectives were in reality contained in the objective of education (cf 6.2.3.2).

In an attempt to condense the very large amount of comments received (477) and responses provided, two aspects tend to stand out. These suggest

that education in general appears to have been accepted as a suitable objective and that for this very reason sub-classical fiction, and the genres of lighter fiction in particular, do not really find acceptance by staff members. This may chiefly be seen to stem from a lack of clear definition of the satisfactions that may be derived from the reading of sub-classical fiction, which again possibly has its origins in many factors such as insufficient research and a low priority for funding.

Thus it may be said that no real understanding of public library users' leisure reading wants emerged. Likewise little if any understanding was found of the satisfactions that attract users to the categories of sub-classical fiction. Although staff respondents were not unaware of users' preferences they seem to relate more to traditional attitudes to leisure reading which appear to be orientated more towards the needs of the public library than the apparent wants of public library users.

### 6.3 CONCLUSIONS

In this section the evidence provided by the users' survey (cf 6.1: Appendix 1) and the librarians' survey (cf 6.2: Appendix 2) will be carefully compared in their essentials, and any discrepancies found between the two will be discussed further in the final chapter.

While a great many questions were posed in an effort to generate open comment and opinions from both the users and library staff respondents, discussion will be confined to the three main areas of concern, as already raised in Chapters 4 and 6 (cf 4.4; 6.1: 6.2). These include the purpose for which users of public library read; their reasons for their choice of reading material; and, finally, the manner in which they habitually read (ie their reading patterns) which are seen as a more unbiased indication of their underlying reading motives.

Based on the logical assumption that the public library wishes to both serve and satisfy the requirements of its rate-paying users, the relationship of public library objectives together with the attitudes of staff members towards the achievement of user reading satisfaction is of fundamental interest to this study. Therefore evidence of the understanding of users' reading patterns in conjunction with the attitudes of staff members towards public library reading, which is influential to the professional function of book selection, will be sought.

In a brief consideration of the biographical characteristics and reading preferences of public library users and library staff members (from the

point of view of interest rather than serious comparison), the latter, as might be expected, was related to a higher educational attainment. This was particularly obvious in the graduate grouping, they also appeared to read proportionately more classical fiction than their users, but admitted to reading no lighter fiction. Age groupings also showed higher percentages in the 30-39 age group and the 30-49 but were marginally younger than user respondents with more 20-29 age group and a greater decline after age 50.

As regards the important aspect of public library users' purpose of reading in relation to public library objectives, in Question 2 (cf 6.1.2.2), the majority of users indicated that the purpose for which they borrowed public library books was leisure (52,3%).

However, this objective did not find favour among public library staff members who rated leisure their third choice (24,3%) in terms of priority. The greatest priority was accorded to the objective of information (32,4%), followed by that of education (28,3%). The other two objectives, as previously suggested, are linked in the provision of knowledge (providing a combined figure of 50,7%). By comparison, reading for the purpose of education found a very small percentage of agreement with users (5,3%) (cf 6.1.2.2: 6.2.3.3).

Staff respondents later tended to reaffirm their choice of objectives, suggesting that future development should be towards that of an information-disseminating centre (cf 6.2.3.4).



In relation to the achievement of user-satisfaction, it was found that staff members attached the greatest importance to the selection of library bookstock (15,5%), followed by that of the professional attitude of staff (14,6%) (cf 6.2.3.6). In relation to the desirable abilities of professional librarians, the first choice was the ability to assess the needs of users (16,3%), which was followed by the ability to develop the public library's collection on a policy that relates to the manifest needs of the communities served (13,%) (cf 6.2.3.7). However, this raises the problem that if it is important for librarians to be able to assess the needs of their users and develop their bookstock accordingly, users should not consider long waiting lists for popular titles (20,8%) and a lack of suitable titles on the shelves (18,3%) as adverse factors to obtaining leisure reading titles of their choice (20,8%) (cf 6.1.2.9).

In regard to users' leisure reading preferences, there was complete agreement among staff members and users in that the bestseller category of fiction was the most popular, although staff respondents considered that lighter fiction was users' second choice. Actual author analysis indicated that classical fiction (i.e. A fiction) was their second preference, although the lack of response to Question 8 (cf 6.2.4.8) should be taken into consideration in terms of possible bias (cf 6.1.2.8; 6.1.3.11; 6.2.4.11). Reasons for such popularity were considered by staff respondents as including the ease of entry into the narrative (14,6%) - a means of harmless escape (13,4%).

Concepts formed by staff respondents in relation to the satisfaction of the leisure objective included the acquisition of insights and

enlightenment (14,7%) (cf 6.2.3.9, and further mentioned in comments), while the attainment of relaxation appeared to be appreciated by staff members (14,2%). Purposeful reading in terms of the constructive organisation of leisure (12,5%) was also rated as important.

In attempting to elicit some indication of users' underlying motives, they were asked for their reasons for leisure reading. Responses indicated that reading for pleasure and entertainment (30,4%), and the relief for daily pressures and tensions were most popular (25,2%). The more purposeful reason of increasing general awareness rated considerably lower (16,2%) (cf 6.1.2.3).

As mentioned in a previous section (cf 6.2) the popularity of sub-classical fiction reading suggests a conflict of interests with staff respondents' chosen public library objectives. Therefore evidence was also sought of the attitudes of staff members towards leisure reading and the needs of their users. As already cited, staff members' responses to questions tended towards the more purposeful attributes of fiction reading. However, from the many comments received to the various questions, two general aspects were emphasised: firstly, a desire to uphold standards, with the provision of books of good quality for self-development, intellectual enrichment and discovery; and secondly an educational attitude towards leisure reading was apparent in comments relating to sub-classical fiction and lighter fiction in particular. Here several staff members indicated that they expected their users to move upwards (i.e. to more complex levels) when they felt themselves ready or able to cope with the increased reading demands, a point of view which

clearly suggests a self-educational attitude (cf 6.2.4.10; 6.2.4.10.2; 6.2.4.13). This idea of progressive leisure reading was also suggested where staff respondents indicated that with guidance from the librarian users could 'exert a little effort' and advance to more complex fiction (48,9%) (cf 6.2.4.14).

Further attitudes in an educational reading direction included comments on the variables that affected public library reading. While agreeing that the socioeconomic environment (cf 6.3.5.2) would affect public library reading (71%), subsequent comments from staff members indicated that, certainly in the opinion of some staff members, those of the highest socioeconomic levels would exhibit the most advanced or refined reading preferences, whilst the less-privileged levels would exhibit a preference for lighter fiction reading. The thinking behind these attitudes was perhaps provided by one staff member who suggested that better books provided better reading satisfaction (cf 6.2.4.10.3). Further educationally orientated comments suggested that those with the least education were not only limited to lighter fiction but that they were 'conditioned' to its stereotyped formulas (cf 6.2.4.16).

From the analysis of users' author preferences it was possible to construct reading patterns of the categories of fiction that users indicated they habitually choose from for their leisure reading. Here it was discovered that far from any educational group reading in one single area (e g bestseller) all educational groups indicated a remarkably similar reading pattern. This pattern reflected a low choice of lighter fiction, a little higher choice of classical fiction, and a majority

choice in each instance of a first preference for the bestseller category. Although, as it might arguably be expected that those with greater education and thus a greater exposure to books would be more familiar with a wider range of classical fiction, this group did not indicate a priority for this category. Likewise, although the lowest educational group showed a slightly higher preference for lighter fiction reading, they also indicated that their education did not prevent them from reading a considerable amount of classical fiction. In common with all educational levels the first choice of leisure reading category was that of the bestseller (58,6%) (cf 6.2.3.11).

In regard to the educational notion of reading progressively as already discussed, when the question of user reading patterns was presented in the Librarians' survey in Question 15 (cf 6.2.4.15) some staff members suggested that few public library users could exhibit reading patterns which included all three categories simultaneously. Although very few staff members indicated an acknowledgement that highly educated people read light fiction occasionally, many decried lighter fiction reading as pandering to public taste, as mindless and in conflict with public library objectives (cf 6.2.4.15).

From the statistics provided by Question 11 checklist (cf 6.1.3.11), it was ascertained that 57% of users read in all three fiction categories; 31% in two categories and only 6% read in one single fiction category. No indication of any user only reading in the category of lighter or C fiction were found.

Finally it must be said that in relation to knowledge concerning the reading wants of public library users, public library staff appear to be well versed in user preferences. However, as far as the manner in which leisure reading satisfaction is achieved by users <sup>if concerned</sup> (i.e. the satisfaction of users' unexpressed or unconscious motives as reflected by their reading patterns) there appears <sup>to be</sup> little understanding or consensus of opinion.

In regard to the purpose of public library reading in relation to the recognised public library objectives, ~~there is~~ a degree of conflict of interests between the objectives of information and education and that of leisure seems evident. This attitude is further illustrated by the comments of some staff members who indicated that they see leisure reading patterns in an entirely progressive manner, an attitude which could not be confirmed in the users' survey (cf 6.1.3.11).

## CHAPTER 7 : GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the information acquired from the literature survey (i.e. Chapters 2-4) on the one hand, and an empirical study, which comprised a user survey (cf Appendix 1) and a librarians' survey (cf Appendix 2) on the other, will be summarised and correlated.

This study has been designed specifically to explore the research supposition as proposed initially in Chapter 1 (cf 1.1) and subsequent proposition developed from the literature survey, and set out in Chapter 4 (cf 4.4), namely that the attitudes of public library staff towards public library objectives exhibit a higher priority towards the pursuit of educational goals - a preoccupation which appears to be at variance with the leisure reading demands of a significant proportion of public library users. The enquiry was directed furthermore towards an assumption that this state of affairs originated from the historical beginnings of public libraries and in the mental and cultural climates at the time when the public library was established. This is particularly true of Britain.

As already mentioned in the previous chapter (cf 6.3), because of the number of questions posed in the two surveys, it is proposed to confine this final discussion only to the material which most directly related to the subject of the research proposition. The ensuing discussion will be considered in three stages: firstly the evidence received from public library users' regarding the purpose for which they borrow books from the

public library; secondly the reasons, or indication of motives, for their initial choice, and, finally, confirmation of these aspects through the analysis of the check list of authors' names in Question 11 (cf 6.1.3.11). These findings will be compared with staff members' attitudes towards the professional objectives of the public library; their understanding of what users prefer to read, and their opinions towards the users' favoured leisure reading and thus the satisfactions achieved (cf 6.1.2.2; 6.1.2.3; 3.1.2-3).

Other aspects which may have a bearing upon staff members' attitudes (cf 1.1), such as the relationship of educational attainment to reading preferences and the development of reading patterns will also be considered as evidence for the appropriateness and efficacy of public library objectives (cf 3.1.2; 4.2.4).

The following section of this chapter will isolate some of the more relevant historical factors raised in the literature survey in Chapters 2-4, and discussed in the general conclusions in Chapter 4 (cf 4.4), and will consider what influence, if any, they have exerted on the present situation.

Finally, the public library objectives (cf 3.1.2) as expressed by the LA in 1971, and as generally employed by Cape Town City Library Service (cf 4.2.4), will be considered not only from the point of view of their accuracy in terms of users' requirements, but as influential factors upon the attitudes of public library staff (cf Ch 6), which in conjunction with their professional training and branch experience, form parameters for the

all-embracing function of book selection. These requirements will then be compared with the initial supposition (cf 1.1.) and the research proposition as developed from the survey of the literature (cf Chs 2-4) (cf 4.4), in order to determine whether or not an element of conflict seems evident between the leisure reading wants of the public library user and the understanding of user needs by public library staff.

## 7.2 SUMMARY : THE CENTRAL ISSUE AND SUPPORTING EVIDENCE.

The fundamental issue in this study may be said to relate directly to the reading wants and satisfactions of public library users and the public library's attitude and perception towards such needs. The latter are expressed not only in the formal objectives as published by the Library Association (cf 6.2.3.1-4; 4.2.4), namely: Education, Information, Culture and Leisure, but also in the opinions and attitudes of public library staff members. In this instance 76,3% of staff members indicated an agreement with these formal objectives( cf 6.2.3.1.1).

These objectives may be seen to be directed, in general, towards the the achievement of very positive satisfactions in reading, which may perhaps be summarised as the acquisition of knowledge for the general purpose of self-development. It must also be said that the fourth objective, that of leisure has been a problematical issue since the establishment of the public library (cf 2.2.3; 3.2.2), in that the satisfaction of this objectives suggests an encouragement of the popularity of sub-classical fiction, which is seen as being at the expense



of the achievement of the other three objectives, particularly when applied to finance and the buying of bookstock (cf 3.2.2; 6.2.4.13).

In considering the three main areas which are central to the argument of this study, namely the purpose of public library reading, the reasons for which users read and the manner in which they read (i.e. the development of reading patterns, considered as a realistic reflection of their expressed and unexpressed motives or wants (cf 4.1.3)), it is intended to first examine the least precise information, as indicated by public library staff comments, and then to proceed to the comparison and discussion of the more direct responses of the formal questions.

Staff members' perception of public library users' leisure-reading needs were characterised not only by purposeful attitudes but also by obvious indications of traditional and professional influences (cf 3.2.2: 4.2.4). Desirable or acceptable leisure reading was frequently referred to as being 'worthwhile' and 'purposeful and enriching' (cf 3.2.2; 6.2.4.10.2) or 'productive' (cf 2.4.13), as providing a 'voyage of discovery' (cf 6.2.4.15) and as the means of self-development (cf 6.2.3.3.2). Acceptable types of books were further described as 'good', 'serious', 'of quality' and as 'those which had stood the test of time' (cf 3.2.2; 6.2.3.10.2-3). Disappointingly, only very few comments were received which disagreed with these traditional attitudes: these included the opinions that spiritual and emotional needs were not catered for (cf 6.2.3.2) (although these were not defined) that the needs of many were ignored (cf 6.2.4.15) and further, that the public library directed its

attention towards the serving of the elitist demands of those who led society (cf 2.3.1.6; 6.2.5.18).

In comparison most users indicated that their habitually preferred leisure reading choices or reading patterns were characterised generally by a preference for sub-classical fiction, and more specifically by a first choice of the category of the bestseller (cf 6.1.3.11). From these rather purposeful indications of staff members' attitudes in regard to leisure reading, limited evidence for any real agreement or understanding of users' reading needs was found.

In terms of the manner in which public library users' achieved satisfaction of reading wants, it was frequently indicated by staff members that not only was leisure reading considered as a means of providing 'self-development' (cf 6.2.3.3.2), but that users - 'progressed' i e rose up the levels of fiction categories from the least complex to the most complex (cf 6.4.10.13). This attitude was difficult to establish firmly in the light of the evidence acquired from the analysis of the author preferences (cf 6.1.3.11), according to which over half of the user respondents read, not in one category at a time, but in all three categories of fiction simultaneously.

The suggestion of an upwards movement in leisure reading (cf 6.2.3.8.1; 6.2.4.10.2) governed by users' educational abilities, (i e those with the least education reading mostly lighter fiction and those with the greatest education reading predominantly classical fiction (cf 6.2.3.5.2)),

also found remained unconfirmed (cf Graph 6.1.3.11c), with all educational groups not only indicating a first choice of the bestseller category but exhibiting a remarkably similar reading pattern (cf 6.3.11), and with a majority (88%) reading in more than two categories of fiction at the same time (cf Graph 6.1.3.11a). This multi-choice of fiction categories not only tends to refute the progressive attitude suggested by staff respondents' comments, but rather indicates a choosing of titles to suit the wants of the moment in preference to striving for the ideal satisfactions that classical fiction has to offer. Thus if there is a single determinant responsible for leisure reading choices, this suggests not an educational association, but rather a relationship with underlying motives or emotional desires of the individual user (cf 4.1.3).

In consideration of the mostly informal comments discussed above it is apparent that many staff members hold somewhat 'rigid and traditional views of fiction reading which are not in obvious agreement with the reading choices exhibited by users. This apparent lack of real understanding was further confirmed by staff members' comments to questions concerning users' reading patterns (cf 6.2.3.8.1; 6.2.4.15). Here respondents offered little evidence that they either understood or appreciated the significance of reading patterns.

The importance of assessing users' reading needs as a means of guiding the selection of the bookstock (cf 6.2.3.6-7), was emphasized by staff members in response to direct questions, showing that they attached a high priority to satisfying users' needs. However, their perception of why users should read that it was of a purposeful nature, their first preference being the provision of insights and enlightenment (cf 6.2.3.9). It should

be added that the attaining of mental relaxation was their second choice (cf 6.2.3.9). From the responses of the users, however, a clear indication was given that the majority wished to read for reasons of pleasure and to defuse tensions (cf 6.1.2.3).

While the first preference of staff members finds little correlation with users', the second certainly appears more comparable. However, when the respective perceptions of the purpose of public library reading are compared, this apparent agreement is less convincing. In this final and crucial aspect the indications of a difference in attitudes become more pronounced. Staff members unreservedly indicated that they knew that their users' first preference for leisure reading was the bestseller category of fiction (confirmed in Question 11 (cf 6.1.3.11), this.

Staff members response to the question regarding preferred objectives, or purposes of the public library (cf 6.2.3), reflected positive support for the objectives of information and education, with the objective of leisure only rating a third choice (cf Graph 6.1.2.2). Such a preference was not exhibited by users in Question 2 (cf 6.2.3.2) where over half the respondents stated that they read for leisure purposes (cf 6.1.2.2).

Thus the preference shown by library staff for the objectives of information and education also suggests an internal conflict with their admitted awareness of the popularity of the bestseller category of fiction (cf 6.2.4.11). Of even greater concern is the obvious discrepancy between the major areas of public library users' preference for leisure reading,

as exhibited by a 63% preference for sub-classical fiction (cf Graph 6.1.3.11), and the indication by public library staff members that the type of reading they would prefer their users to read primarily were works of an informational or educational nature (cf 6.2.3.3).

### 7.3. HISTORICAL INFLUENCES AND CONCLUSIONS

As already suggested in the summary of the literature survey in Chapter 4 (cf 4.4), the less than whole-hearted acceptance of sub-classical fiction is a present-day manifestation of the fiction problem experienced by the Mechanics' Institutes (cf 2.2.1.5), and which was later inherited by the newly established public library (cf 2.2.3). However, although Altick defines this problem as the inability of library staff to determine the extent to which they should provide what they considered best for their users and to what extent they should accede to users' demands (cf 2.2.3), it seems apparent that this problem is more complex and derived from many factors. Firstly, there is still an element of influence emanating from the many traditions inherited by the public library (cf 2.2.1.1-5), particularly those of an educational and religious nature in relation to reading generally. This is further exacerbated by the academic association of librarians' own professional training, which, being university orientated, is in an environment in which books and reading relate to both teaching and research, but not to leisure (cf 2.2.3.1).

Secondly, only one type of historical library was to provide an influence upon the public library which laid no claim to intellectual pretensions, it also enjoyed the greatest popularity among all members of the general

public, namely the circulating library (cf 2.2.1.4). It is noteworthy that this type of library found little favour among the more educated male members of the public library (cf 2.2.1.4).

This problem also raises the question of the achievement of reading satisfaction and of the success of the early novel (cf 2.2.1) (i.e. the first bestseller). The popularity of this fiction category has more frequently met with criticism than understanding. Taking into account certain mid-nineteenth century social and religious reservations regarding reading which affected the emotions or overtly lacked purpose (cf 2.2.1.4), it would appear unrealistic that over a century later, when so much information, knowledge and experience is available, these early factors should continue to influence the public library.

It appears that with reference to the justification for the establishment of the public library (cf 2.5), involving the objectives of informal adult education and self-improvement as dictated by its association with social reform (cf 2.2.2.1), the public library is unable or unwilling to relinquish these objectives. This suggests an uncertainty as to their continued public financial support should they pursue such a course. However, because of the lack of any real research and serious development of public library objectives, including the restricted research into user reading needs, the real basis of the fiction problem appears to be one of a lack of public confidence and, thus, accreditation. Paradoxically this both emanates from, and, in turn, has denied the public library the adequate funding it requires to conduct the necessary research upon which

to build not only realistic objectives but a measure of self-confidence to allow it to meet the challenges of users' leisure reading needs.

Finally, the research proposition, (cf 1.1) which was developed from the literature survey in Chapters 2-4, and expressed fully in Chapter 4 (cf 4.4), will be considered, viz:

The predominant attitudes of public library staff towards public library objectives exhibit a higher priority towards the pursuit of educational goals - a preoccupation which appears to be at variance with the leisure reading demands of a significant proportion of public library users.

The study has provided evidence that the public library staff exhibit a predilection for the pursuit of the educational and information goals of the public library (cf 6.2.3). The study has also indicated that staff respondents are of the opinion that their user population tend to use the public library for the express purpose of satisfying leisure needs, i.e. by reading sub-classical fiction (cf 6.2.4.11). The staff surveyed appear not to interpret the two modes of objectives as being in conflict with one another (cf 6.2.4.13). They seem to believe instead that, having introduced their users to sub-classical categories of fiction, an incentive will be created among these readers for satisfying their reading needs by the use of material of a more educational and informative nature (cf 6.2.4.13.2).

On the other hand the investigation has indicated clearly that the majority of users surveyed use the public library for the sheer satisfaction of their leisure needs and wants (cf 6.1.2.2; 6.1.2.3). Such satisfaction is achieved by the reading of sub-classical fiction, most of which constitutes the bestseller type of novel (cf 6.1.2.4; 6.1.2.8; 6.1.3). It would appear that the majority of users tend to view their leisure-reading pursuit as an end in itself, rather than as a stepping-stone to eventual educational upliftment.

While the study has not provided conclusive proof that the predominant views of librarians and public library users are at variance, there are strong indications from this exploratory study that there is a potential tension in the perception of the primary role to be played by the public library in society. This suggests that further research needs to be conducted in a more rigorous manner to establish the true basis of the perceived function of the public library in society by its users on the one hand and by public librarians on the other.



G.R. SCHIRMER

APPENDIX 1

USERS' SURVEY

QUESTIONNAIRE

## APPENDIX 1 : LIBRARY USERS' SURVEY

June 1980

### QUESTIONNAIRE - LEISURE READING IN THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

This questionnaire, compiled as part of an M.A. research project into leisure reading in public libraries, is being carried out under the auspices of the School of Librarianship at U.C.T. Your help in answering ALL the questions - will be greatly appreciated.

1. HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY? (please tick)
  - 1.1 Daily 1%
  - 1.2 Twice weekly 12%
  - 1.3 Weekly 6%
  - 1.4 Fortnightly 33%
  - 1.5 3 Weeks 42%
  - 1.6 Monthly 3%
  - 1.7 Longer? 2%
  
2. FOR WHAT PURPOSE DO YOU USUALLY TAKE OUT PUBLIC LIBRARY BOOKS?
  - 2.1 To find information 25,5%
  - 2.2 To further my formal education 5,3%
  - 2.3 To broaden my mind 16,6%
  - 2.4 For leisure 52,3%
  - 2.5 Other reasons (please specify) Nil
  
3. LEISURE READING - i.e. reading in your own free time, not related to work or formal study - DO YOU READ PUBLIC LIBRARY BOOKS FOR ANY OF THE FOLLOWING REASONS?
  - \* 3.1 To pass the time pleasantly 20,3%
  - \*\* 3.2 To help get to sleep 8,3%

	3.3 As an interesting hobby	15,4%
**	3.4 To help relax tensions	8,6%
*	3.5 An easy and inexpensive form of entertainment	10,1% * 30,4%
	3.6 To keep up with new authors and titles	10,9%
**	3.7 To get away from daily pressure	8,3% ** 25,2%
	3.8 To increase general awareness	16,2%
	(Other reasons?)	1,5%

4. LEISURE READING CATEGORIES - please indicate from which of the following categories you usually choose - (please tick)

4.1. Classic literature  
e.g. Dickens, Bronte etc

4.1.4. Contemporary literary novels  
e.g. Durrell, Greene, Bellow, Isherwood etc

TOTAL 12,8% CLASSICAL FICTION (A  
fiction)

---

4.2. Best-sellers

4.3. Other popular novels -

4.3.1. Adventure : Crime, Espionage, Spy, Who-dun-it

4.3.2. Historical : Family sagas, fictionalised  
events and characters

4.3.3. Location : Foreign, city, rural, sea etc

4.3.4. Occupation : Medical, political, teaching,  
religion, journalistic etc

TOTAL 49% BESTSELLER FICTION (B  
fiction)

---

4.3.5. Romance

4.3.6. Science fiction

4.3.7. War

4.3.8. Westerns

TOTAL 15,6% LIGHTER (C fiction)

---

4.4. Other

TOTAL 22,4% OTHER

5. HOW DO YOU USUALLY HEAR ABOUT THE BOOKS YOU WANT TO READ?

5.1.	Talk to friends	23%
5.2.	Usually too busy to hear about new books	1,9%
5.3.	Read book reviews in the local newspapers	18,7%
5.4.	Check the new books lists at your local public library	5,8%
5.5.	Notice what is on the reservation shelf at your local public library	8,9%
5.6.	See book reviews in the overseas press	5,8%
5.7.	Check on what other people return to the public library	9,7%
5.8.	Usually find on the public library shelves by chance	18,3%
5.9.	Other (please specify)	8,5%

6. DO YOU EVER RESERVE FICTION BOOKS AT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY?

Frequently 6% Occasionally 49% No 38% Other 8,5%

TOTAL RESPONSE : 100

7. HOW DO YOU USUALLY FIND BOOKS FOR YOUR LEISURE READING AT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY? (Please tick)

7.1.	Browse around the shelves until you find something that looks interesting	23,7%
7.2.	Know what authors you want to read	23,0%
7.3.	Check the catalogues to see what is in stock	9,1%
7.4.	Take books from those returned on the trolley	15,9%
7.5.	Ask the library staff to help you	6,4%

7.6. Use the book jacket as a useful indication of what you want to read	9,4%
7.7. Discuss your leisure reading needs with the Librarian-in-charge	1,0%
7.8. Prefer to stick to what you know you like to read	8,8%
7.9. What other means do you use?	2,3%
(Other)	1%

8. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY WAS YOUR MOST FAVOURITE TYPE OF BOOK FOR LEISURE READING?

Bestseller Fiction	-	37,6%
Lighter Fiction	-	17,6%
No Preference	-	-
'general'	-	16,8%
Other	-	28%

9. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ADVERSE FACTORS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED AT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY - in relation to obtaining the leisure reading titles of your choice?

9.1.	Long waiting lists for popular titles	20,8%
9.2.	Arrangement of books on the shelves	13,9%
9.3.	Staff too busy to give assistance	2,5%
9.4.	Not enough titles of the type of books you prefer to read	18,3%
9.5.	Catalogues too complicated to be of any practical help	4,4%
9.6.	Can never remember the names of authors	17,7%
9.7.	Never know what to look for	4,4%
9.8.	Library does not seem to have the kind of books you like to read	4,4%
9.9.	Have read everything on the library shelves	3,1%
9.10.	Other reasons?	10,6%

## 10. CHOOSING TITLES FOR LEISURE READING

10.1. How long do you usually take to choose books in the public library - (for yourself) (please tick)

10.1.1.	15 mins.	33%
10.1.2.	30 mins.	41,9%
10.1.3.	45 mins.	10,7%
10.1.4.	an hour	8,2%
10.1.5.	longer?	2,6%

(Other/Varies) 3, 2%

10.2. Do you ever experience any difficulty in choosing books for your leisure reading -

Frequently	7%	Occasionally	55%	No	28%
				Other	10%

# 11. LEISURE READING - AUTHORS

Please tick (up to 10) any of the following authors whose books you enjoy reading -

Aldiss, Brian	Bloom, U	Colette
Aleichem, S *	Blish, James	Condon, Richard
Anthony, Evelyn	Bradbury, Ray	Conlon, K
Ashe, Gordon	Brain, John	Conrad, J *
Archer, J *	Brand, Max	Cookson, Catherine
Asimov, Isaac	Bronte, Charlotte	Cope, Jack
Austen, Jane	Buchan, John	Creasy, John
Bagley, Desmond	Bemelman, C *	Crispin, E
Ballard, James	Caldwell, T *	Cronin, A J
Banks, Lynn Reid	Canning, Victor	Deighton, Len
Bates, H.E.	Cary, Joyce	De La Roche, Mazo
Beaty, David	Cassidy, C	Delderfield, H E
Beckwith, C *	Chase, James Hadley	De Polnay, Peter
Bellow, Saul	Christie, Agatha	Douglas, C C
Bemelman, C *	Clarke, Arthur C	Drabble, Margaret
Benzoni, Juliette	Cleary, Jon	Drury, Allen
Bermant, C *	Cloete, Stuart	Duncan, Jane
Boll, Heinrich	Cody, S	Du Maurier, Daphne

Dunnett, Dorothy  
Eden, D \*  
Edson, J T  
Eliot, George  
Fast, H \*  
Fleming, I  
Forester, C S \*  
Forster, E M \*  
Forsyth, Frederick  
Francis, Dick \*  
Freeman, C \*  
Fullerton, A \*  
Gallico, Paul  
Galsworthy, John  
Gann, G \*  
Gaskin, Catherine  
Gass, G \*  
Gavin, Cathrine \*  
Godden, Rumer  
Golan, S \*  
Gordimer, Nadine  
Goudge, Elizabeth \*  
Graham, Winston  
Greene, G \*  
Grey, Zane  
Gainham, Sarah \*  
Haggard, William  
Hailey, A \*  
Hardy, Thomas  
Hartley, L P  
Heinlein, Robert A  
Hemingway, Ernest  
Heyer, Georgette  
Highsmith, Patricia  
Hodge, Jane Aitken  
Holt, Victoria \*

Holland, C \*  
Howatch, Susan  
Hoyle, Frederick  
Huxley, Aldous  
Innes, Hammond  
Isherwood, Christopher  
James, Henry  
Jenkins, Geoffrey  
Jennings, P \*  
Kafka, Franz  
Keating, H R F  
Kemelman, Harry  
Keneally, Thomas  
Kent, Alexander  
Kyle, Elisabeth,  
Konsalik \*  
Lane, Margaret  
Lathem, Emma  
Lawrence, D H  
Le Carre, John  
Lessing, Doris  
Lewis, C S  
Levin, Ira  
Lofts, Norah \*  
Ludlum, R \*  
McBain, Ed  
MacCaffrey, Anne \*  
McCullum, Colleen \*  
McCullers, Carson  
McClure, James \*  
Malamud, Bernard  
MacInnes, Helen \*  
Maugham, W Somerset  
Michener, James  
Monsarrat, Nicholas  
Murdoch, Iris

Moray, Helga \*  
Nabokov, Vladimir  
Norton, Andre \*  
O'Brien, Edna  
Paton, Alan  
Pearson, Diane \*  
Plaidy, Jean  
Plain, Belva \*  
Potock, C  
Powell, Anthony  
Pym, Barbara  
Queen, Ellery  
Reeman, Douglas  
Rendell, Ruth  
Renault, Mary  
Robbins, H \*  
Roth, Phillip  
Schaefer, Jack  
Scholefield, Alan  
Shaw, Irwin  
Sheckley, Robert  
Shute, N \*  
Sieffert, Elizabeth  
Sillitoe, Alan  
Silverberg, Robert  
Simenon, George  
Singer, Isaac Bashevis  
Slaughter, Frank G  
Smith, Wilbur  
Snow, C P  
Solzhenitsyn, Alexander  
Spark, Muriel  
Spring, H \*  
Steinbeck, J \*  
Sterling, Jessica  
Stevenson, D E



Stewart, Mary \*  
 Stone, Irving  
 Sutcliff, Rosemary  
 Symons, Julian  
 Taylor, Elizabeth  
 Tey, Josephine  
 Thomas, Dylan \*  
 Thompson, Kate \*  
 Tolkein, J R R  
 Trollope, Anthony  
 Tuttle, C  
 Upfield, Arthur \*  
 Uris, Leon  
 Van der Post, Laurens  
 Van Sylke, Helen  
 Wainwright, John  
 Wallace, Irving  
 Waugh, Evelyn  
 West, M \*  
 Wheatley, Dennis  
 White, Patrick  
 Wodehouse, P G  
 Wyndham, J \*  
 Yerby, Frank  
 Zindel, Paul

TOTAL AUTHORS 142

Other authors added  
 by respondents +49  
 Fiction (+ 7 other)

TOTAL RESPONSE TO AUTHOR  
 LIST: 1 350

A FICTION	36,4%
B FICTION	58,7%
C FICTION	4,8%

CLASSICAL FICTION 36,4%

SUB-CLASSICAL  
 FICTION 63,5%

READING PATTERNS:

CATEGORIES OF FICTION  
 CHOSEN

57% READ IN 3 CATEGORIES

31% " " 2 "

6% " " 1 "

6% 'OTHER'

12. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA - (please tick where applicable).

12.1 Age Group: 20's 16%, 30's 22%, 40's 20%, 50's 7%, 60's 18%,  
70's 11%. (under 20's 2%).

12.2 Educational qualification:

(1) Standard 6 & 7	2%
Standard 8 & 9	16%
= <u>Pre-Matriculation:</u>	18%
(2) Matriculation or equivalent	48%
(3) Diploma (post-matriculation)	18%
(4) Bachelor' degree	10%
(5) Postgraduate degree or diploma	6%
= <u>Postgraduate:</u>	16%
Other ...	-

12.3 Marital status:

Single	20%
Married	68%
Other	

12.4 Sex:

Male	34%
Female	66%

12.5 Occupational status:

		<u>Full-time</u>	<u>Part-time</u>	<u>Retired</u>	<u>Not working</u>
Professional	29%				
Managerial	8%				
White-collar worker	9%				
Wage-earner	9%				
Housewife	25%				
Student	7%				
Other ...	13%				
		59%	17%	21%	3%

APPENDIX 2

LIBRARIANS' SURVEY

QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 2 : LIBRARIANS' SURVEY

JUNE 1980

QUESTIONNAIRE - LEISURE READING IN THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

This questionnaire forms part of a survey into the attitudes towards leisure reading in the Public Library - both from the points of view of the library staff and the borrowers. The questions it contains have been prepared in conjunction with the head of the library School at U.C.T. and, as I am anxious to complete this part of the survey may I ask you to answer ALL questions and return to me at Requests Section. H.O. as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your help

Gillian Schirmer.

- A. Name of Branch :
- B. Qualifications and year: Post.Grad-60,5%; ALA-18,4%;  
Lower Dip-13,1%; Hons-7,8%.
- C. Years of Professional experience : 0-2 : 23,6%; 3-5 : 18,4%; 9-12 :  
13,1%; 13-15 : 13,1%; 16-20 : Nil; 21-26 : 13,1%
- D. Do you have experience of any other type of library, other than  
public libraries ? Yes 28,9% No 71,1%  
If so, what type/s.....
- E. Age grouping : 20s - 23,6%; 30s - 31,5%; 40s - 26,3%;  
50s - 18,4%; 60s - nil.
- F. How many books do you normally read in a month for your own leisure  
reading (i.e. reading in your own free time, not related to work or  
formal study) ? ....  
1-5 : 31,5%; 6-10 : 34,2%; 11-15 : 23,6%; 16-20 : 10,5%

G. What percentage of your overall reading is fiction? ....

Seven read 25% & 75% and 12 read 50% & 100%.

H. What are you actually reading at the moment?

Please give authors and titles -

Non-Fiction	36,1%
Classical fiction	25,3% (fiction = 63,9%)
Sub-classical fiction	38,6%

1. What is your reaction to the definition of the of the public library objectives as prepared by the Public Library Research Group of the London and Home counties branch of the (British) Library Association? (cf. The Library Association Record. vol.73. no. 12, 1871. p. 233), viz. -

1.1 EDUCATION :

To foster and provide means for self-development of the individual/group at whatever stage of education closing the gap between the individual and recorded knowledge.

1.1.1. Agree 76,3%      1.1.2. Don't agree 2,6%

1.1.3. Agree, with reservations 21,1%

If 1.1.3., please elaborate briefly if considered necessary. 18,4%

1.2 INFORMATION :

To bring to the individual/group accurate information quickly and in depth, particularly on topic of current concern.

1.2.1. Agree 73,6%      1.2.2. Don't agree 2,6%

1.2.3. Agree with reservations 23,6%

If 1.2.3., please elaborate briefly 23,6%

1.3 CULTURE :

To be one of the principal centres of cultural life and promote a keener participation, enjoyment and appreciation of all the arts.

1.3.1. Agree 65,7%      1.3.2. Don't agree Nil

1.3.3. Agree, with reservations 34,2%

If, 1.3.3., please elaborate briefly 34,2%

1.4. LEISURE :

To play a part in encouraging the positive use of leisure and providing material for change and relaxation.

1.4.1. Agree 86,8%      1.4.2. Don't agree Nil

1.4.3. Agree with reservations 13,1%

If 1.4.3., please elaborate

2. Comments - if any, relating to issues raised in 1.1 - 1.4. including the addition of any other analogous aspects. 21,5%

3. Rank the previous objectives listed 1.1. - 1.4. in order of importance. (e.g. first choice : 1.2.)

3.1.1. First choice 32,4%

3.1.2. Second 24,3%

3.1.3. Third 28,3%

3.1.4. Fourth 14,8%

3.2. Please elaborate briefly on the reasons underlying your first choice

- 89,4%

4. In which direction would you prefer to see the Public Library orientate itself for future development?  
(Please indicate the degree of importance you consider any of the following merits on a scale of from 1 - 5 i.e. 1-important to 5-not important.)

4.1.	Academic : 'people's university'	11,7%
4.2.	Cultural centre	21%
4.3.	Information-disseminating centre	24,3%
4.4.	Recreational centre	15,1%
4.5.	Multi-media agency	13,4%
4.6.	Social centre	8,4%
4.7.	Study centre for school pupils	5,8%
4.8.	No change	
4.9.	Other type of agency (please specify)	Nil

5. Do you consider any of the following User-variables as potentially important in their effect on the public library in terms of the provision of suitable bookstock.

5.1. Age: Yes 65,7% No 21% No opinion 13,1%

5.1.1. If yes, in what respect ? 65,7%

5.2. Social-economic environment :

Yes 71% No 21% No opinion 7,8%

5.2.1. If yes, in what respect ? 73,6%

5.3. Level of formal education :

Yes 81,5% No 13,1% No opinion 5,2%



5.3.1. If yes, in what respect ? 78,9%

5.4. Sex :            Yes 55,2%            No 39,4%            No opinion 5,2%

5.4.1. If yes, in what respect ? 52,6%

5.5. User's own motivation :

Yes 57,8%            No 15,7%            No opinion 26,3%

5.5.1. If yes, in what respect : 60,5%

6. In terms of achieving user-satisfaction - please indicate the degree of importance you attach to the following aspects, using a scale of from 1 - very important, to - 5 - of no importance.

6.1.	Accommodation	10,5%
6.2.	Effective top library management	12,7%
6.3.	Funding	12,7%
6.4.	Professional attitude of staff	14,6%
6.5.	Publicity	7,3%
6.6.	Quality of work-shop training for all staff	10,5%
6.7.	Selection of library bookstock	15,5%
6.8.	Scientific knowledge among staff of community served	9,1%
6.9.	User-education	4,5%
6.10.	Other (please specify)	2,2%

7. What do you consider to be desirable abilities in professional librarians?

Please rank the following in order of importance to you on a scale of from 1 - most desirable, to 5 - least desirable.

7.1. To be able to define what is a worthwhile book 10,7%

7.2.	To be able to assess the needs of the individual user	16,3%
7.3.	To be instrumental in upholding the moral and spiritual values of the community	2,3%
7.4.	To guide public library users away from books of an inferior nature to more worthwhile reading	5,1%
7.5.	To instil a love of reading by the provision of books of good quality	11,6%
7.6.	To be a reader, preferably of a wide range of books themselves	10,7%
7.7.	To appreciate the potential effect of different types of books on different users	12,1%
7.8.	Conversely, to understand that different users can obtain different satisfactions from reading the same book	11,2%
7.9.	To be able to develop the public library's collection on a policy that relates to the manifest needs of the communities served	13%
7.10.	Other abilities you consider important (please specify)	6,5%

8. The term 'Reading pattern' - of an individual public library user is frequently seen in library journals. Could you define, in a very few words what the term means to you?

Response : 38

- 8.1. If you are able to discern reading patterns in the reading habits of your users, what type of reading pattern/s do you consider is/are the most general?

Response : 38

9. What particular concepts have you formed of the public library objective of leisure reading? Please rank any of the following that may coincide with your own thinking.

Please rank from 1 - towards your own thinking, to 5 - away from your own thinking

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 9.1. As a means of constructively organising leisure time  | 12,5% |
| 9.2. As a way of attaining mental relaxation   | 14,2% |
| 9.3. To acquire insights and enlightenment from the experience of others   | 14,7% |
| 9.4. To be able to share in the thoughts of superior minds of the world's best writers                                       | 9,8%  |
| 9.5. To enjoy the aesthetic pleasure of literary craftsmanship   | 9,2%  |
| 9.6. A socially acceptable pastime   | 3,2%  |
| 9.7. To contribute to the mental health of the community by affording the means of defusing tensions from the work situation | 6,5%  |
| 9.8. As a means of improving reading skills  | 5,4%  |
| 9.9. As bait, to encourage users to come to the library and thus come into contact with decent books                         | 3,8%  |
| 9.10 Purely as a means of giving the pleasure of reading and re-reading books in one's own free time                         | 13,6% |
| 9.11 Your own ideas on the subject?  | 6,5%  |
10. Public libraries usually have some unofficial means of dividing fiction titles into categories, such as the following -
- 10.1.1. Classical fiction : Works of classical literature or acknowledged literary merit, whose authors are cited in the Companions to English and American literature.
  - 10.1.2. Bestseller fiction : This category usually includes the majority of fiction, such as best sellers, historical novels, family sagas, novels of human relationships and crime novels.
  - 10.1.3. Lighter fiction : Books exhibiting a more predictable and stereotyped plot-line, often similar to that of 10.1.2. but with less depth of characterisation and complexity. This category also includes such sub-genres as the love-story, who-dun-it-crime stories, doctor-nurse and cow-boy stories.

- 10.2. Would you generally agree with these divisions ?  
 Yes 76,3% No 5,2% Yes with Reservations 18,4%
- 10.2.1 If your answer is 'No' or 'With reservation' - please  
 comment briefly 26,3%
- 10.3. Do you think that more prominence should be given to the  
 provision of lighter fiction in public libraries?  
 Yes 21% No 55,2% No opinion 2,6%  
 Yes with Reservations 21%
- 10.3.1 If yes, please elaborate briefly 26,3%
- 10.3.2. If no, or with reservations, please give your reasons  
 68,4%

11. On the basis of your experience, please rank 11.1 - 11.3 in order of  
 popularity among public library users.

- |       |                    |       |
|-------|--------------------|-------|
| 11.1. | Classical fiction  | 6,4%  |
| 11.2. | Bestseller fiction | 51,6% |
| 11.3. | Lighter fiction    | 41,9% |

12. How would you account for the popularity of the fiction category  
 identified in 11.?

Please rank against a scale of from 1 - very relevant to 5 -  
 irrelevant.

- |       |  |       |
|-------|--|-------|
| 12.1. | Ease of entry into narrative                                       | 14,6% |
| 12.2. | Relatively little effort or concentration<br>required              | 10,6% |
| 12.3. | An easy form of relaxation   | 12,3% |
| 12.4. | Provides a sense of glamour in an otherwise<br>dull and drab world | 8,4%  |

12.5.	Gives some sense of comfort for the unhappy and lonely	7,8%
12.6.	A quick and harmless means of escape from one's immediate surroundings	13,4%
12.7.	An easy means of acquiring interesting knowledge	7,3%
12.8.	A means of vicarious experience	10,1%
12.9.	Provides a little harmless excitement	8,4%
12.10.	Your own opinion and ideas ?	6,7%

13. Do you consider the provision of light fiction (cf 10.1.3.) to be in conflict with the public library's objectives as outlined in 1.1. - 1.4.?

Yes 18,4%      No 73,6%      n/o 7,8%

- 13.1.      If yes, please elaborate briefly 26,3%

- 13.2.      Please comment on the following statement 'free fiction is as illogical and as big an imposition on the rate-payers as municipally subsidised free suburban arenas would be...' Scot Haigh, The Argus, 25.5.79.

Disagree 21%      Disagree with reservations 68%

Agree with reservations 5,2%      Other 5,2%

- 13.3.      Would you say that leisure reading i.e. reading in your own free time, not related to work or formal study, is a more constructive activity than watching television?

- 13.3.1.      If yes, please elaborate briefly

Response : 33

14. Some public library users habitually read lighter fiction (10.3. category). Is it your opinion that if guided by the librarian such readers could read more complex fiction with -

Please rank on a scale from 1 - no difficulty to 5 - inability.

14.1.	No difficulty	18,3%
14.2.	A little effort	48,9%
14.3.	Much effort	26,5%
14.4.	Could not manage at all	6,1%

15. Some public library users exhibit a wide fiction reading-pattern that encompasses the very complex to the very light types of fiction reading. At the other end of the scale some users appear only to read light fiction. This implies that more provision should be made for the latter users.'

Please comment briefly on the above statement.

Response : 38

16. Within which of the following groups do public libraries have most in common?

Please rank against a scale of from 1 - much in common, to 5 - little in common.

16.1.	Schools, colleges and universities	36,9%
16.2.	Museums, art galleries and opera houses	23%
16.3.	Community or civic centres	26,1%
16.4.	Other (please specify)	13,8%

17. Do you consider that the public library reaches enough people?

Yes 23,6%      No 68,4%      n/o 7,8%

17.1.      If no, please state reasons briefly 73,6%

18. Do you feel the often made claim, viz that the public library is an elitist institution, is valid?

Yes 15,7%      No 84,2%      n/o Nil

18.1.      If yes, please elaborate briefly 34,2%

19. Using the user-variables cited in 5.0., together with any of your choice, could you describe the type of public library user, who, from your own observation, appears to experience the maximum difficulty in finding titles to satisfy their leisure reading needs?

Response : 36

APPENDIX 3

LIST OF SOURCES CONSULTED



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